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Gregorio Piaia

Giovanni Santinello *Editors*

# Models of the History of Philosophy

Vol. III: The Second Enlightenment and  
the Kantian Age



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Gregorio Piaia • Giovanni Santinello  
Editors

# Models of the History of Philosophy

Vol. III: The Second Enlightenment  
and the Kantian Age

in association with  
Francesca D'Alberto and Iva Manova

 Springer

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# Foreword to the English Edition

The English edition of the *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia* (Brescia, Padua and Rome, 1979–2004, 5 vols in 7 tomes) continues with this third volume, which covers the age from Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*, symbol *par excellence* of the Enlightenment, to that of Kant and his followers. The Italian edition of the volume, which was published in 1988, ended with Gottlieb Buhle's *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* and *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*. However, the English edition also includes the first chapter of the subsequent volume IV/1, *L'età hegeliana. La storiografia filosofica nell'area tedesca* (1995), in order to provide the reader with a complete picture of the historiographical developments of Kantianism, from K.L. Reinhold, G.G. Fülleborn, K.H. Heydenreich, J.Chr.A. Grohmann, and W.G. Tennemann, up to J.F. Fries and Reinhold junior. We thus present a full account of the concept of an a priori history of philosophy, deriving from a psychological interpretation of the Kantian notion of 'transcendental'.

Before its translation, the original text was revised and corrected, and the bibliography was thoroughly updated. The presentations of the authors systematically treated in this volume follow the pattern already adopted in the previous volumes of *Models*:

1. Chapter number
- 1.1. Number of the author within the chapter
- 1.1.1. Biography of the author
- 1.1.2. List of his works
- 1.1.3. Presentation of his concept of the history of philosophy
- 1.1.4. Analysis of his historiographical work(s)
- 1.1.4.1. Presentation of the structure of the work(s)
- 1.1.4.2. Periodization proposed within the work(s)
- 1.1.4.3. Historiographical theories propounded in the work(s)
- 1.1.4.4. Methodological choices
- 1.1.5. Reception of the work(s)
- 1.1.6. Bibliography on the author

In the last few decades, the critical literature on the period under consideration has increased considerably, even in the specific field of the historiography of philosophy; nevertheless, I am convinced that the systematic work of analysis and contextualization of the general histories of philosophy carried out by Giovanni Santinello and his team continues to provide an original contribution both to the history of philosophical historiography and to the intellectual history of the modern age.

It is impossible to list here the many people who made valuable contributions towards the production of this volume, to all of whom we give our thanks. I would, however, especially like to mention Sarah Hutton, director of the series ‘Archives internationales d’histoire des idées – International Archives of the History of Ideas’, and the Springer commissioning editors, Cristina dos Santos, Anita Rachmat, and Catherine Davis. Particular thanks are also due to the translators: Carmel Ace (Chaps. 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11.1 and 11.3, 11.4), Raffaella Roncarati (Chaps. 1, 2, 3, 7, 9 and 11.2), and Hilary Siddons, who, having translated the second volume of the work, has completely revised this edition. The services of the latter were funded by the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (PRIN 2009, directed by Professor Gregorio Piaia), the University of Padua (‘Progetto di Ateneo’ 2010, directed by Professor Giuseppe Micheli), the University of Verona (Professor Mario Longo) and the SEPS (Segretariato Europeo per le Pubblicazioni Scientifiche) of Bologna, to all of whom we owe our gratitude.

Padua, Italy  
15 March 2015

Gregorio Piaia

## Preface to the Italian Edition

The 'later Enlightenment' is understood here to denote European thought after the mid-eighteenth century, while the 'age of Kant' corresponds to the final decades of that century and the very beginning of the following one. These terms are applied to Germany – where a substantial change took place in the historiography of philosophy, as well as in philosophy itself during this period – but they are also applicable to the rest of Europe, with Kant as the symbol of a renewal which disseminated beyond Germany, both directly and indirectly. The previous *Models of the History of Philosophy* dealt with Deslandes and Brucker, Valletta and Capasso, and the early Enlightenment, which, in the historiography of philosophy, correspond to an initial formulation of the problem which was answered by the concept of a 'critical history' of philosophy.

Volume III explores the development of this critical history to the point of a full philosophical awareness of the concept of *histoire de l'esprit humain*, the more precise and problematic reflection elaborated by Kant and some of his followers concerning philosophy in relation to its history, and the fulfilment of a plan to create a 'philosophical' or 'theoretical history' in the context of the Scottish Enlightenment. This new theoretical reflection would give rise to the most interesting 'general histories' of philosophy. A discussion of these will bring us to the threshold of the period of German and European classical idealism, which will be covered in Volume IV.

We have tried not to lose sight of the conceptual boundaries of this work, which is not concerned with the historiography of philosophy as such, but only with the 'general histories' of philosophy. It is important to keep these boundaries in mind as we gradually approach the nineteenth and the twentieth century, centuries which saw an increase in the production of monographs on the history of philosophy, and of many other 'genres'. This increase led initially to the establishment and deepening of the sense of general history in its own right – as opposed to the rich variety of genres which can be used by the history of philosophy – and subsequently to a decline in interest with regard to the general framework and a tendency to prefer monographs and philological research.



But here the concept of ‘general history’ is not employed in a mechanical way, which would entail making a number of exclusions. The Enlightenment inevitably brought about a development of the concept of ‘modern’; indeed, starting from the rebirth of the sciences and the arts, a series of historiographical works on the period of the Modern Age appeared. Strictly speaking, these works do not fall into the category of general history: on purely factual bases, we should have excluded works like D’Alembert’s *Discours préliminaire*, Buhle’s *Geschichte*, and Dugald Stewart’s *Dissertation*. On the other hand, these formulations of the ‘modern’ are made precisely in relation to, or in contrast with, a particular interpretation of mediaeval and ancient thought, and thus fall within the range of a general conception of history. For this reason, which may be considered practical but which is also fully justified on a theoretical level, period histories have also been included in our project and therefore form part of the analysis presented here, especially those which became period histories not because they were originally designated as such, but because for their own reasons their authors left them unfinished.

As in the preceding volumes, each chapter consists of an introduction – intended to outline the features of the period under discussion and to connect the ‘general histories’ to the philosophical and historiographical activity and cultural environment of the age – and a series of ‘fact files’ devoted to the authors of general histories. Also as in the preceding work, there are two exceptions, two chapters which do not share this common structure because they do not deal with ‘general histories’: the first, on the history of philosophy in the *Encyclopédie*, and the tenth, concerning Kant. The inclusion of these two subjects is justified on the same grounds as our inclusion of Bayle’s *Dictionnaire* and Heumann’s *Einleitung zur historia philosophica* in the previous volume. They are decisive for a theoretical understanding not only of the concept of the history of philosophy, but also of the significance of its becoming structured as a general history and manifesting itself as indicative of a totality. This can be seen in the numerous reflections contained in the *Discours préliminaire*, whose weave of theoretical ideas and historiographical theories became a necessary point of reference for French authors in the second half of the eighteenth century. But it can also be seen in the various historiographical contributions by D’Alembert and above all by Diderot, which were also collected and published separately under the significant title *Histoire générale des dogmes et opinions*.

There are similar and more obvious reasons for including Kant. Kant never wrote a general history and overtly denied that his ‘critique’ was a judgement on or a discussion of philosophical works written by others. Nevertheless, it is well known that he had a historiographical education in a milieu influenced by Brucker’s ideas, which was then undergoing a transformation. Brucker’s teachings and writings are both filled with specific historical references at all phases of their production; and he focused directly on the issue of philosophy and its history. This led Kant to criticize Brucker’s eclectic theory and to his assertion of the need to shape historiographical questions in rigorously philosophical and theoretical terms. Kant’s criticism led directly to romantic and idealistic historicism.

In the later Enlightenment and the age of Kant, the production of general histories of philosophy continued to be shaped by the geographical and cultural areas to which they belonged. In France, in the wake of a tradition which originated with Bayle and Deslandes, this production maintained its militant character, mostly addressing itself not to schools but to broader audiences, fighting the cause of the *Lumières*. This was true not only of lay works, but also of religious apologetics. However, opposing sides were not always represented by the *dévots* and the *philosophes*. At times, as in the case of the Jansenist abbé Pelvert, there were scholars who felt the need to step outside of their contemporary surroundings and seek the elements of judgement in history, comparing the errors and misguided unbeliefs of the ancients with those of the moderns. Pelvert does not condemn Modernity as such, but only in so far as it contains aberrant ideas. Indeed, while distrusting philosophers in general, Pelvert could not avoid finding correspondences supporting his theology precisely along the line of modern thought, from Descartes to Arnauld and Malebranche. As it was by Deslandes, the history of philosophy is regarded as a part or an aspect of a more general *histoire de l'esprit humain*. Yet this expression acquired a stronger sense, fed by the concept of progress. An authentic philosophy of history was emerging, with its concept of the progress of the human spirit, and this philosophy found a humanistic substitute for the theological and Augustinian perspective, which had been propagated by Bossuet. New historiographical categories were established to divide the 'successive advances of the human spirit' into periods, as stated in the title of the well-known *Tableau* by Turgot. Nature repeats itself in a cycle of unchanging revolutions, while the history of humanity presents itself as changing from century to century, in a varying and diverse progression. In the midst of the tragedy caused by the Terror, Condorcet was to speak of the *révolutions* of the human species, thus positing that the category of revolution was a sign marking the major periods of history, including the history of philosophy. Voltaire had already put forward an interpretation of 'centuries' in terms of human progress, viewing them as unequal. Not many of them were influential, but those that were included: the fourth century before Christ for the Greeks, the age of Caesar and Octavianus, the mid-fifteenth century in Italy and the century of Louis XIV. In this way, French historiography of philosophy parted ways with erudition and acquired a definite structure that made its works general and total histories.

The other category which was developed for purposes of periodization, and in order to understand and compare the various philosophies, was that of 'system'. This concept appeared in the works of numerous historiographers, notably Savérien, Batteux and Condillac, and subsequently prevailed in Degérando, partly as a result of the influence exerted – directly at this time – by Kant and German historiography. Classification and periodization into 'sects' or schools was abandoned, to be replaced by explanations of a conceptual nature: the thorough, erudite treatment of historical and philosophical details was marginalized and replaced by a historiography of an increasingly speculative tendency. Hence, in Condillac's view, it is from a system of theoretical types, rather than from a contingent historical collection of cases, that the 'errors' deriving from abstract systems (Descartes, Malebranche, Leibniz, Spinoza) emerge, along with the truth reached by the theory of sensism.

Italian philosophy was deeply influenced by French thought and, where historiography was concerned, by Brucker and German eclecticism. Here the newly produced general histories were intended not only for use in schools, as in the case of the successful manuals produced by padre Soave, but also for a wider learned public, in accordance with Enlightenment ideas. On another level, the historiography of philosophy was also related to the erudite tradition which had flourished in the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century. On the Italian scene, besides many minor figures whose historical and cultural importance should, however, not be ignored, the most notable figures were Girolamo Tiraboschi and Appiano Buonafede.

Tiraboschi, Muratori's intellectual heir, was a historian of literature, a field belonging to the liberal arts of the imagination. Yet he placed the history of philosophy in the broader general background of the history of the 'sciences', which are the product of reason and experience. The history of philosophy, pertaining to the sphere of 'sciences', is indeed the discipline *par excellence* and consequently falls within Tiraboschi's interests and occupies extensive parts of his work, thus entering the all-embracing orbit of the *historia litteraria*.

Buonafede, on the other hand, sought to follow Brucker and proved to be the first and for a long time the only Italian historiographer of great significance. Thanks to the valuable contribution he made to knowledge, notably of the Modern Age, his *Della restaurazione* was soon translated into German. At the same time, however, Buonafede countered Brucker's protestant *animus* with an apology for the Catholic faith, providing historical documents of philosophical thought, and used apologetic arguments against the unbelief of Enlightenment intellectuals. In contrast with Brucker's pessimistic views, for Buonafede the general history of philosophy contains a multitude of signs that faith in God and the immortality of the soul is more widespread and shared than is commonly believed. While agreeing with the general inclination towards modern rather than mediaeval thought, Buonafede was able to discern the merits of a few major scholastics, such as Anselm, Bonaventure and Aquinas. This would seem to indicate the first glimmer of a reconsideration of mediaeval philosophy, even though in this case is somewhat distorted by Buonafede's apologetic intentions. In the other spiritual camp, that of Italian Jansenism, we should mention Paolo Marcello Del Mare, the author of a history which stopped at the Hellenistic age, but offered nonetheless many forceful new ideas, such as a positive reassessment of Epicurus' thought.

In Great Britain, after Stanley and the 'archeologies' of the Cambridge Platonists, the historiography of philosophy remained almost completely dormant for over half a century. It resumed its course in the context of the movement known as the Scottish Enlightenment, whose ideas differed in many respects from those of continental thinkers. Despite these differences, however, the influence of Brucker and his abridgers is clearly visible. But the really original contribution made by the Scottish movement came from the widespread sensitivity towards the history of culture which was nurtured by philosophers like Hume and historians like Gibbon, Robertson and Ferguson. The controversy against erudition and the need for a discussion which was either 'philosophical' or 'theoretical' – so as not merely to

juxtapose facts, but also relate them to the development of the human mind and to structure them to provide explanations – gave rise to the essays on the historiography of philosophy by Smith as well as to the vast works by Lord Monboddo and Dugald Stewart. Although they dealt with widely differing subjects – the former focused on the ancients, the latter on the moderns – they agreed that the history of philosophical thought is capable of illustrating the progressive self-knowledge of the ‘mind’ and of possessing an understanding of the moral and political sphere of man.

For Monboddo, inspired by the ancients, the dimensions of the mind are explicitly metaphysical: it is the Mind of God which lies at the root of nature and is all-pervasive; it is the mind of man which manifests itself in the developments of language and culture. The history of this development begins with the transition from a nomadic to a sedentary life; its most outstanding manifestations are ancient Egyptian knowledge, which was transmitted to the Greeks by Orpheus and Musaeus, and eventually reached its apogee with the philosophy of Pythagoras and Plato, Aristotle and Alexandrian Neoplatonism. Monboddo thus renewed an old theme of Ficino’s, which was taken up in England by the Cambridge Platonists. The history of philosophy is therefore the history of the manifestations of the mind through time and in nature. Monboddo took these metaphysical aspects of the theme as his presuppositions and joined them with empirical interests, thereby producing an extremely wide-ranging history, in which the subject matter, collected through experience, is arranged according to these presuppositions.

In Stewart, on the other hand, what prevails is the empirical dimension typical of Hume and the Scottish school, as well as a preference for modernity. Once again we encounter the development and progress of the human mind, as it is documented in the history of Western thought. But here this development corresponds above all to the history of ideas and modes of thinking, which show man’s liberation from the shadows of mediaeval superstition and the diffusion of enlightenment in the achievements of philosophy and the modern sciences. Stewart embodied a cautious, moderate form of enlightenment: it is possible to find explanations for the reality of the mind alternative to those offered by Western thought, as might happen if we considered other manifestations of human thought, such as those of India or China.

Finally, developments in Germany provide a closer view of the significance of the transition from the ‘critical’ history of Wolffism and eclecticism to the historiography of philosophy which resulted from Kant’s radical ideas. Brucker’s work was followed by a series of school textbooks which were also influenced by other thinkers, such as Rousseau, Herder and the Scots, and thus effected a gradual distancing from Wolff. But the really new features which characterized German culture and led to substantial changes in the historiography of philosophy were represented above all by the intense development of historical and literary studies at the University of Göttingen (with its openness to the British West and the influences it exerted on the Russian East) and by the great philosophical personalities of the time, such as Herder and Kant. Towards the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, this resulted in the production of vast general histories of philosophy which clearly distanced themselves from Brucker’s model. These are the works of Tiedemann, Buhle and Tennemann, and they were accompanied

by profound discussions on the subject, which developed the theory produced by eclecticism at the beginning of the century in an idealistic direction. Among them, let us mention the dissertations by Garve, Hissmann and Hofmann between the 1770s and 1780s, and the debates from the 1790s onwards carried out to a great extent by the Kantians, often in the pages of Fülleborn's *Beyträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie*.

Two major trends emerge in the course of these debates: one is represented by the Kantians themselves and was to prevail at the beginning of the new century following a distinctly idealistic direction; and the other, represented by Meiners and above all by Tiedemann, did not develop a theory independently, but unfolded mainly in the arguments against the followers of Kant. These writers defended and promoted a historiography which was open to the history of culture and civilization because, in their view, it was the meaning of philosophy itself which changes in relation to the various kinds of cultural connections existing in various historical periods. Tiedemann in particular accused the Kantians of only being able to establish a real philosophy of the history of philosophy when they were able to carry out their plan of creating an a priori history of philosophy, deriving all possible philosophical systems from the nature of the human faculty of thinking. Though declaring himself unwilling to concentrate his efforts on the possible accomplishment of such a plan, he definitely excluded this a priori deduction from the work of the 'pragmatic historian', defending the specific nature of historiographical as opposed to theoretical work. It is possible to see a position in late-eighteenth-century historiography which contrasts, on a theoretical level too, with the idealism towards which German historical and philosophical culture was moving.

The theory of progress formulated by Tiedemann can also be read in an anti-Kantian, anti-idealistic light. In the history of thought, there is always progress, even though this progress advances at varying speeds, sometimes faster, sometimes more slowly. The tool for viewing and judging this progress is not a theoretical standard, which takes as its criterion of judgement the truth of a philosophy, perhaps the latest to have appeared in the course of history, namely, our own. Rather, there are criteria within the systems that have followed on from one another in time, determined by their progressive increase in coherence, their logical consistency, the greater clarity of their ideas and the quantity and quality of the thoughts which have been synthesized and organized.

Having given these general characterizations of each geographical area, it is now worth mentioning a few common lines of convergence which, despite continuing differences, may be considered to represent the progress made by the genre of the 'general history of philosophy'. In our view, the convergence takes place on the following points: the need for a theory which examines the theme of the history of philosophy more deeply, like the German formulations, paralleled by equivalent – and perhaps slightly more superficial – observations by the *philosophes* and the Scottish movement's discussions of 'philosophical history'; the category of progress, universally shared and particularly significant in the case of the historical growth of philosophy; the placing of this history in the broader *histoire de l'esprit*, not only for the French, but also for the anthropological receptivity

which developed in Göttingen and the historiography of the human sciences in Scotland; and the category of system, present not only in France, but obviously also in historiographical Kantianism as well as in the theoretical ideas put forward by Smith, Monboddo, and Stewart.

These common themes, although variously expressed, are indications of the decline of the eclectic theory in which historiography had expressed itself in the age of Brucker. It was no longer necessary to combat the sectarian spirit by turning to the inventive and harmonizing freedom of the most diverse doctrines, in which the historiographer had to display his objective impartiality; on the contrary, the historian had to discard the erudition and the prejudices of tradition and concentrate on the most advanced ideas and the new achievements engendered by criticism. What comes to the fore among all these historiographical currents of philosophy is the ideal and theoretical value of the new positions reached by discussing and surpassing the past, thanks both to their polemical and ideological weight and to their logical 'truth'. The process based on systems shows how the development of thought is not guided by the contingent nature of becoming but by a rational coherence.

The need for a systematic structuring also involved reflection on the rhythms of progress and on how to give a historiographical description of them: a division by 'revolutions' or 'centuries', or a linear process, albeit at an inconstant speed (Tiedemann), or again a process by dichotomies of contrasting systems, as in the case of Kant's outlines and the more extensive discussions by the Kantians (Buhle, Tennemann). This topic not only constitutes a choice of presentation, but implies an awareness of the existence of a deeper problem. Progress and the ways of structuring it presuppose a direction, a standard measure of the degrees of advancement; finally, they require a vision of the history of philosophy which is guided and enlightened by the philosophy in which the writer is immersed. The thinker who perceived the problem of the relationship between philosophy and its history most acutely was Kant, and he transmitted this perception to the historiographers who followed him, thus bringing us to the threshold represented by Hegel's identification of philosophy with the history of philosophy. That threshold was reached but not crossed, either by Kant or by the Kantians. Philosophy remained only a possible science, a regulative but not a constitutive guide for absolute knowledge, for reason which manifests itself as a finite reality through its history and must inevitably remain within the sphere of the finite. The 'histories' of the Kantians, which were sometimes presented as possible *a priori* constructions, like the history of reason, still lacked dialectic, here understood as the logical and metaphysical structure of Hegel's concept of absolute knowledge.

The theoretical results attained by historiography were immediately reflected in a new interpretation of some well-established historical questions. Take, for example, the much debated question of the beginning of the history of philosophy: whether it began with the barbarians or with Eastern pre-Greek philosophy, and so forth. With Tiedemann, Kant and Buhle, the theory that tended to prevail and to present itself as most legitimate held that the history of philosophy begins with Greek thought, because only with the Greeks do we find that rational thinking

which distinguishes the very essence of philosophy. The general histories were also influenced by the many existing monographs and works of philology produced on individual authors, such as Plato, who became the subject of analysis in his own right, distinguished – more distinctly than before – from Neoplatonism. There was renewed appreciation of the Neoplatonists, who were positively reappraised by Tiedemann and also partly by Buhle (although not by Kant). With Tiedemann, and to a certain extent Buonafede, even the Middle Ages were freed from their generally negative associations, and a mediaeval historiography began to take shape, though it was handled with greater confidence only in the nineteenth century. The category of the modern, on the other hand, though maintaining its former ideological weight, became more precise, and even more problematic as regards its limits and its contents.

The scope of a preface does not allow us to go much beyond a brief mention of the theoretical themes underlying the present ‘history’. To discuss them, to take into consideration the contemporary issues surrounding them, is a stimulating and demanding task, suited for another occasion.

This third volume of *Models of the History of Philosophy* is the work of a team of scholars who have been researching the subject for many years: Italo F. Baldo, Francesco Bottin, Giuseppe Micheli, Gregorio Piaia, Giovanni Santinello and Ilario Tolomio, from the *Istituto di storia della filosofia* of the University of Padua, and Mario Longo from the *Istituto di Filosofia* of the University of Verona. Anna Fabriziani acted as secretary. Gregorio Piaia was responsible for the coordination of the resulting material, the editing of the manuscripts and the examination of proofs prior to publication.

We would like to express our warmest gratitude to the many colleagues and friends who provided generous help and collaboration. In particular, for research relating to France, we would like to thank Giuliano Bergamaschi and Laura Scarduelli, authors of two lengthy fact files, and Natalina Ghiotto for Britain. We are sincerely grateful to Professor Lutz Geldsetzer for the treatment of historiography in Germany, as well as overall consideration of the work, and valuable suggestions and advice, and the facilities and bibliographical material generously made available by his *Institut für Philosophie* at the University of Düsseldorf. We would also like to thank Professor Luciano Malusa from the University of Verona in his capacity as a consultant.

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This volume is dedicated to the memory of a friend who followed this research with interest: Charles B. Schmitt from the Warburg Institute in London, who passed away prematurely here in Padua on the 15 April 1986, while he was working as a visiting scholar at our *Istituto di storia della filosofia*.

Padua, Italy  
1 October 1987

Giovanni Santinello



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11.2	Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann (1761–1819) <i>Geschichte der Philosophie</i> <i>Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie</i> .....	838
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# Abbreviations

## (A) Literature of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

### (a) *Bibliographies, Critical Studies, and Reference Works*

<b>Adickes</b>	E. Adickes, <i>German Kantian Bibliography</i> (Boston, 1895–1896; repr. New York, 1970).
<b>Brucker</b>	J.J. Brucker, <i>Historia critica philosophiae</i> (Leipzig, 1742–1744), 4 vols in 5 tomes; <i>Appendix</i> (Leipzig, 1767); facs. repr. of the whole (Hildesheim and New York, 1975).
<b>BUAM</b>	<i>Biografia universale antica e moderna</i> [...] (Venice, 1822–1831), 65 vols.
<b>BUAM Suppl.</b>	<i>Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne. Supplément</i> [...] (Paris, 1834–1862), 39 vols.
<b>Buhle</b>	J.G. Buhle, <i>Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie und einer kritischen Literatur derselben</i> (Göttingen, 1796–1804), 8 vols in 9 tomes.
<b>Calogerà<sup>2</sup></b>	A. Calogerà, <i>Nuova raccolta d'opuscoli scientifici e filologici</i> (Venice, 1755–1787), tomes 42.
<b>Carus</b>	F.A. Carus, <i>Ideen zur Geschichte der Philosophie</i> (Leipzig, 1809).
<b>Corr. litt.</b>	<i>Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique par Grimm, Diderot, Raynal, Meister</i> [...], ed. M. Tournoux (Paris, 1877–1882), 16 vols.
<b>Cousin</b>	V. Cousin, <i>Cours de philosophie. Introduction à l'histoire de la philosophie</i> [1828] (Paris, 1991).
<b>Dégérando<sup>1</sup></b>	J.-M. Dégérando, <i>Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie, considérés relativement aux principes des connaissances humaines</i> (Paris, 1804), 3 vols.

- Degérando**<sup>2</sup> J.-M. Degérando, *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie, considérés relativement aux principes des connaissances humaines*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn rev. and enl. (Paris, 1822–1823), 4 vols.
- De Tipaldo** E. De Tipaldo, *Biografia degli italiani illustri nelle scienze, lettere ed arti del secolo XVIII* [...] (Venice, 1834–1845), 10 vols.
- Ernesti** J.H.M. Ernesti, *Enzyklopädisches Handbuch einer allgemeinen Geschichte der Philosophie und ihrer Litteratur* [...] (Lemgo, 1807; repr. Düsseldorf, 1972).
- Ersch-Gruber** *Allgemeine Enzyklopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste in alphabetischer Folge*, J.S. Ersch and J.G. Gruber eds. (Leipzig, 1818–1889), 67 vols.
- Fabroni** A. Fabroni, *Vitae Italorum doctrina excellentium qui saeculis XVII et XVIII floruerunt* (Pisa, 1778–1805), 20 vols.
- Franck** *Dictionnaire des science philosophiques* [...], ed. A. Franck (Paris, 1844–1852; 1875<sup>2</sup>), 6 vols.
- Gumposch** V.Ph. Gumposch, *Die philosophische Literatur der Deutschen von 1400 bis auf unsere Tage* (Regensburg, 1851; repr. Düsseldorf, 1967).
- HA** *Histoire de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres depuis son établissement jusqu'à présent. Avec les mémoires de littérature [= HA Mém.] tirez des registres de cette Académie* (Paris, 1717–1808), 51 vols.
- Hegel**<sup>1</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke*, vols 18–20, E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel eds. (Frankfurt a.Main, 1971), 3 vols [ed. Michelet, 1833–1836].
- Hegel**<sup>2</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, G.J.P.J. Bolland and A.H. Adriani eds (Leiden, 1908) [ed. Michelet, 1840–1844].
- Heinsius** W. Heinsius, *Allgemeines Bücher-Lexikon* [...] 1700–1810 (Leipzig, 1812–1813; repr. Graz, 1962), 4 vols.
- Hurter** H. Hurter, *Nomenclator literarius theologiae catholicae* [...] (Innsbruck, 1903–1913; New York, 1962), 5 vols.
- Jöcher** Ch. G. Jöcher, *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon* [...] (Leipzig, 1750–1751; repr. Hildesheim, 1960–1961), 4 vols.
- Jöcher/Erg.** J.Ch. Adelung and H.W. Rotermund, *Fortsetzung und Ergänzungen zu Christian Gottlieb Jöchers allgemeinen Gelehrten-Lexicon* (Leipzig, Delmenhorst, and Bremen, 1784–1897; repr. Hildesheim, 1960–1961), 7 vols.
- Kayser** Ch.G. Kayser, *Index locupletissimus librorum, qui inde ab anno MDCCCL usque ad annum MDCCCXXXII in Germania et in terris confinibus prodierunt* (Leipzig, 1834; repr. Graz, 1961), 25 vols.



<b>Krug</b>	W.T. Krug, <i>Geschichte der Philosophie alterer Zeit, vornehmlich unter Griechen und Römern</i> (Leipzig, 1815).
<b>Landau</b>	M. Landau, <i>Geschichte der italienischen Litteratur im achtzehnten Jahrhundert</i> (Berlin, 1899).
<b>Lombardi</b>	A.Lombardi, <i>Storia della letteratura italiana nel secolo XVIII</i> (Modena, 1827–1830), 4 vols.
<b>Marbach</b>	G.O. Marbach, <i>Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie</i> (Leipzig, 1838).
<b>Meusel</b>	<i>Das gelehrte Teutschland, oder Lexikon der jetzt lebenden teutschen Schriftsteller</i> , G.C. Hamberger and J.G. Meusel eds. (Lemgo, 1796–1834), 23 vols.
<b>Picavet</b>	F. Picavet, <i>Les idéologues</i> (Paris, 1891; repr. Hildesheim and New York, 1972).
<b>Romagnosi-Poli</b>	<i>Manuale di storia della filosofia di Guglielmo Tennemann, tradotto da Francesco Longhena, con Note e Supplimenti dei professori Giandomenico Romagnosi e Baldassare Poli</i> , vol. IV: <i>Supplimenti</i> (Milan, 1836).
<b>Tennemann</b>	W.G. Tennemann, <i>Geschichte der Philosophie</i> [...] (Leipzig, 1798–1819; repr. Bruxelles, 1970), 11 vols.
<b>Zanella</b>	G. Zanella, <i>Storia della letteratura italiana dalla metà del Settecento ai giorni nostri</i> (Milan, 1880).
<b>Zeller</b>	E. Zeller, <i>Die Geschichte der alten Philosophie in den letzverflossenen 50 Jahren mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die neuesten Bearbeitungen derselben</i> [1843], in Id., <i>Kleine Schriften</i> , ed. O. Leuze (Berlin, 1910), pp. 1–85.

### (b) Periodicals

<b>AB</b>	<i>Auserlesene Bibliothek der neuesten deutschen Litteratur</i> (Lemgo, 1772–1781).
<b>Abicht</b>	<i>Philosophisches Journal</i> [...], ed. J.H. Abicht (Erlangen, 1794–1795).
<b>ADBibl.</b>	<i>Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek</i> , ed. Ch. F. Nicolai (Berlin and Stettin, 1765–1796).
<b>AE</b>	<i>Annali ecclesiastici. Secolo XVIII</i> (Florence, 1780–1793).
<b>AHB</b>	<i>Allgemeine historische Bibliothek</i> , ed. J.C. Gatterer (Göttingen, 1767–1771).
<b>AL</b>	<i>L'année littéraire, ou Suite des lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps</i> (Amsterdam [= Paris], 1754–1790).
<b>ALI</b>	<i>Annali letterarj d'Italia</i> (Modena [= Venice], 1762–1764).
<b>ALZ</b>	<i>Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung</i> , Ch.G. Schütz and F.J. Bertuch eds. (Jena, Leipzig, and Halle, 1785–1849).

<b>ALZ/Erg.</b>	<i>Revision der Literatur</i> [ . . . ] in <i>Ergänzungsblättern zur allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung</i> (1801–1805); <i>Ergänzungsblätter zur allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung</i> (1807–1843).
<b>AM</b>	<i>Allgemeines Magazin für kritische und populaire Philosophie</i> , ed. J.W.A. Kosmann (Breslau, 1791–1794).
<b>APh</b>	<i>Annalen der Philosophie und des philosophischen Geist</i> , ed. L.H. Jakob (Halle and Leipzig, 1795–1797).
<b>BA</b>	<i>Berlinische Archiv der Zeil und ihres Geschmacks</i> (Berlin, 1796–1800).
<b>BB</b>	<i>Bibliothèque britannique</i> [ . . . ] (Geneva, 1796–1815).
<b>BF</b>	<i>Bibliothèque française</i> [ . . . ] (Amsterdam, 1723–1746).
<b>BGPh</b>	<i>Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie</i> , ed. G. Fülleborn (Zullichau-Freystadt, 1791–1796).
<b>BM</b>	<i>Berlinische Monatsschrift</i> , F. Gedike and J.E. Biester eds. (Berlin, 1783–1796).
<b>DM</b>	<i>Deutsches Museum</i> , Ch.W.K. von Dohm and H.Ch. Boie eds. (Leipzig, 1776–1788).
<b>EL</b>	<i>L'Europa letteraria. Giornale</i> (Venice, 1768–1773).
<b>ELR</b>	<i>Efemeridi letterarie di Roma</i> (Rome, 1772–1798; 1806).
<b>ER</b>	<i>The Edinburgh Review</i> (Edinburgh, 1755–1756; 1802–1929).
<b>FL</b>	<i>La frusta letteraria di Aristarco Scannabue</i> (Rovereto and Trento [= Venice and Ancona], 1763–1765).
<b>GA</b>	<i>Göttingisches Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen</i> (Göttingen, 1753–1801; see GGA).
<b>GBU</b>	<i>Giornale bibliografico universale</i> (Milan, 1807–1811).
<b>GE</b>	<i>Giornale enciclopedico</i> (Venice and Vicenza, 1774–1782; see NGE).
<b>GEL</b>	<i>Giornale enciclopedico di letteratura italiana e oltremontana</i> (Florence, 1784).
<b>GEN</b>	<i>Giornale enciclopedico di Napoli</i> (Naples, 1785–1786).
<b>GER</b>	<i>Giornale ecclesiastico di Roma</i> (Rome, 1786–1798).
<b>GER Suppl.</b>	<i>Supplemento al Giornale ecclesiastico di Roma</i> (Rome, 1789–1798).
<b>GEU</b>	<i>Giornale enciclopedico ovvero universale</i> (Venice, 1788–1789).
<b>GGA</b>	<i>Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen</i> [ . . . ] (Göttingen, 1802-).
<b>GGLEI</b>	<i>Giornale della generale letteratura d'Europa e principalmente dell'Italia</i> (Venice, 1766–1767).
<b>GGZ</b>	<i>Gothaische gelehrte Zeitungen</i> (Gotha, 1774–1804).
<b>GIL</b>	<i>Giornale dell'italiana letteratura</i> (Padua, 1802–1828).
<b>GL</b>	<i>Giornale de' letterati</i> (Pisa, 1771–1796; see NGL).
<b>GLE</b>	<i>Il genio letterario d'Europa</i> (Venice, 1793–1794).
<b>GLI</b>	<i>Giornale della letteratura italiana</i> (Mantova, 1793–1795).
<b>GLN</b>	<i>Giornale letterario di Napoli</i> [ . . . ] (Naples, 1793–1797).
<b>GM</b>	<i>Göttingisches Magazin der Wissenschaften und Literatur</i> , G.Ch. Lichtenberg and G. Forster eds. (Göttingen, 1780–1785).

<b>GPL</b>	<i>Giornale pisano dei letterati</i> (Pisa, 1806–1809).
<b>HJL</b>	<i>Heidelbergsche Jahrbücher der Literatur</i> (Heidelberg, 1808–1872).
<b>JALZ</b>	<i>Jenaische allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung</i> , ed. H.C.A. Eichstädt (Jena and Leipzig, 1804–1841).
<b>JE</b>	<i>Journal encyclopédique</i> (Liège, Bouillon, and Bruxelles, 1756–1793).
<b>JS</b>	<i>Journal des sçavans</i> (Amsterdam 1665–1792; 1797).
<b>LLZ</b>	<i>Leipziger Literatur-Zeitung</i> (Leipzig, 1800–1803, 1812–1833).
<b>LZ</b>	<i>Litteratur-Zeitung</i> , ed. J.G. Meusel (Erlangen, 1799–1802).
<b>ME</b>	<i>Magazin encyclopédique, ou Journal des sciences, des lettres et des arts</i> (Paris, 1792–1793, 1795–1816).
<b>MEB</b>	<i>Memorie enciclopediche</i> (Bologna, 1781–1787).
<b>MR</b>	<i>The Monthly Review</i> (London, 1749–1789; 1790–1825).
<b>MSSLC</b>	<i>Memorie per servire alla storia letteraria e civile</i> (Venice, 1793–1800).
<b>MT</b>	<i>Mémoires de Trévoux</i> , or <i>Mémoires pour l’histoire des sciences et des beaux-arts</i> , or <i>Journal de Trévoux</i> (Trévoux, Lyon and Paris, 1701–1767; repr. Geneva, 1968–1969).
<b>NADB</b>	<i>Neue allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek</i> , ed. Ch.F. Nicolai (Kiel, Berlin and Stettin, 1793–1806).
<b>NGE</b>	<i>Nuovo giornale enciclopedico</i> (Vicenza, 1782–1789).
<b>NGEI</b>	<i>Nuovo giornale enciclopedico d’Italia</i> (Venice, 1790–1797).
<b>NGL</b>	<i>Nuovo giornale dei letterati</i> (Pisa, 1802–1806).
<b>NGLdI</b>	<i>Nuovo giornale letterario d’Italia</i> (Venice, 1788–1789).
<b>NGLI</b>	<i>Nuovo giornale de’ letterati d’Italia</i> (Modena, 1773–1790); starting from 1774: <i>Continuazione del Nuovo giornale de’ letterati d’Italia</i> .
<b>NGZ</b>	<i>Nürnbergische gelehrte Zeitung</i> (Nürnberg, 1777–1789).
<b>NL</b>	<i>Novelle letterarie pubblicate in Firenze</i> (Florence, 1740–1768).
<b>NLLZ</b>	<i>Neue Leipziger Literaturzeitung</i> (Leipzig, 1803–1810).
<b>NPhL</b>	<i>Neueste philosophische Litteratur</i> , ed. J.Ch. Lossius (Halle, 1778–1782).
<b>NTA</b>	<i>Neue theologische Annalen</i> (Marburg and Leipzig, 1798–1823).
<b>NTM</b>	<i>Der neue teutsche Merkur</i> , ed. C.M. Wieland (Weimar [= Leipzig], 1790–1810); see <b>TM</b> .
<b>OALZ</b>	<i>Oberdeutsche allgemeine Litteratur-Zeitung</i> , ed. L. Hübner (Salzburg and Munich, 1788–1816).
<b>PhB</b>	<i>Philosophische Bibliothek</i> , J.G.H. Feder and C. Meiners eds. (Göttingen, 1788–1791).
<b>PhJ</b>	<i>Philosophisches Journal</i> [ . . . ], ed. F.I. Niethammer (Leipzig, 1795–1800).
<b>PhJM</b>	<i>Philosophisches Journal für Moralität, Religion und Menschenwohl</i> , C.C.E. Schmid and F.W.D. Snell eds. (Giessen, 1793–1794).
<b>PhM</b>	<i>Philosophisches Magazin</i> , ed. J.A. Eberhard (Halle, 1788–1792).

<b>PSUSA</b>	<i>Progressi dello spirito umano nelle scienze, e nelle arti, o sia Giornale letterario</i> [ . . . ] (Alli Confini dell'Italia [= Venice], 1780–1784).
<b>RGDL</b>	<i>Repertorium des gesamten deutschen Literatur</i> (Leipzig, 1834–1845).
<b>SLI</b>	<i>Storia letteraria d'Italia</i> (Venice and Modena, 1750–1759).
<b>TM</b>	<i>Der Deutsche Merkur</i> , ed. C.M. Wieland, (Weimar, 1773–1789); see NTM.

## **(B) Bibliographical Surveys, Biographical Dictionaries, Periodicals, and Critical Studies (Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries)**

<b>ADB</b>	<i>Allgemeine deutsche Biographie</i> (Leipzig and Munich, 1875–1912), 56 vols.
<b>Banfi</b>	A. Banfi, <i>Concetto e sviluppo della storiografia filosofica</i> [1933], in Id., <i>La ricerca della realtà</i> , vol. 1 (Florence, 1959 [Reggio Emilia and Bologna, 1997]), pp. 101–167.
<b>Braun</b>	L. Braun, <i>Histoire de l'histoire de la philosophie</i> (Paris 1973; Strasbourg, 1995).
<b>Capone Braga</b>	G. Capone Braga, <i>La filosofia francese e italiana del Settecento</i> (Padua, 1941), 3 vols.
<b>Ciliberto</b>	<i>Giordano Bruno. Parole, concetti, immagini</i> , ed. M. Ciliberto (Pisa and Florence, 2014), 3 vols.
<b>Cioranescu</b>	A. Cioranescu, <i>Bibliographie de la littérature française du Dix-huitième siècle</i> (Paris, 1969).
<b>Dagen</b>	J. Dagen, <i>L'histoire de l'esprit humain dans la pensée française de Fontenelle à Condorcet</i> (Paris, 1977).
<b>DBF</b>	<i>Dictionnaire de biographie française</i> (Paris, 1933-).
<b>DBI</b>	<i>Dizionario biografico degli italiani</i> (Rome, 1960-).
<b>DCLI</b>	<i>Dizionario critico della letteratura italiana</i> , ed. V. Branca (Turin, 1973), 3 vols.
<b>DECBPh</b>	<i>The Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century British Philosophers</i> , J.W. Yolton, J.V. Price and J. Stephens eds. (Bristol, 1999), 2 vols.
<b>DECGPh</b>	<i>The Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century German Philosophers</i> , H.F. Klemme and M. Kuehn eds. (London and New York, 2010), 3 vols.
<b>DELI</b>	<i>Dizionario enciclopedico della letteratura italiana</i> (Bari and Rome, 1970).
<b>DHGE</b>	<i>Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques</i> (Paris, 1912-).
<b>DNB</b>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> (London, 1908–1909), 22 vols.

- DThC** *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (Paris, 1909–1972), 15 vols.
- Ferrari** L. Ferrari, *Onomasticon. Repertorio biobibliografico degli scrittori italiani dal 1501 al 1850* (Milan, 1947).
- Freyer** J. Freyer, *Geschichte der Geschichte der Philosophie im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 1912).
- Garin** E. Garin, *Storia della filosofia italiana* (Turin, 1978), 3 vols.
- Geldsetzer** L. Geldsetzer, *Die Philosophie der Philosophiegeschichte im 19. Jahrhundert* (Meisenheim am Glam, 1968).
- Getto** G. Getto, *Storia delle storie letterarie* (Florence, 1981<sup>4</sup>).
- Gueroult** M. Gueroult, *Dianoématique. I. Histoire de l'histoire de la philosophie*, vol. 1: *En Occident des origines jusqu'à Condillac*; vol. 2: *En Allemagne de Leibniz à nos jours*; vol. 3: *En France de Condorcet à nos jours* (Paris, 1984–1988).
- IBN** *Index Bio-Bibliographicus notorum hominum*, J-P. Lobies and F.-P. Lobies eds. (Osnabrück, 1973).
- Kirchner** J. Kirchner, *Das deutsche Zeitschriftenwesen. Seine Geschichte und seine Probleme* (Wiesbaden, 1958–1962), 2 vols.
- Marino** L. Marino, *I maestri della Germania, Göttingen 1770–1820* (Turin, 1975).
- Models** *Models of the History of Philosophy*, vol. 1: *From its Origins in the Renaissance to the "historia philosophica"*, ed. G. Santinello, English eds C.W.T. Blackwell and Ph. Weller (Dordrecht, Boston, and London, 1993); vol. 2: *From Cartesian Age to Brucker*, G. Piaia and G. Santinello† eds. (Dordrecht, 2011).
- Motzo Dentice d'Accadia** C. Motzo Dentice d'Accadia, 'Intorno alla storia della filosofia in Italia nel Settecento', *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia della r. Università di Cagliari*, a.a. 1930–1931 (Rome, 1931), pp. 87–109.
- Natali** G. Natali, *Storia letteraria d'Italia. Il Settecento* (Milan, 1964<sup>2</sup>), 2 vols.
- NDB** *Neue deutsche Biographie* (Berlin, 1953–).
- Proust** J. Proust, *Diderot et l'Encyclopédie* (Paris, 1962; repr. Geneva and Paris, 1982).
- RDE** *Recherches sur Diderot et sur l'Encyclopédie* (I, 1986–).
- Rétat** P. Rétat, *Le Dictionnaire de Bayle et la lutte philosophique au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1971).
- Schneider** U.J. Schneider, *Die Vergangenheit des Geistes. Eine Archäologie der Philosophiegeschichte* (Frankfurt a.Main, 1990).
- Simone** F. Simone, *Il Rinascimento francese. Studi e ricerche* (Turin, 1961).
- Sommervogel** *Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus*, new edn by C. Sommervogel, Pt. I, vols I–X (Brussels and Paris, 1890–1909); Pt. II, vol. XI (Paris, 1932); Suppl., vol. XII (Toulouse, 1911–1930); repr. of the whole (Louvain, 1960).

- SVEC** *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, I, 1955-).
- Ueberweg** *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie, begründet von Friedrich Ueberweg. Die Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1: *Grossbritannien und Nordamerika, Niederlande*, H. Holzhey and V. Mudroch eds. (Basel, 2004); vol. 2: *Frankreich*, J. Rohbeck and H. Holzhey eds. (Basel, 2008); vol 3: *Italien*, J. Rohbeck and W. Rother eds. (Basel, 2011).
- Varani** G. Varani, *Pensiero 'alato' e modernità. Il neoplatonismo nella storiografia filosofica in Germania: 1559–1807* (Padova, 2008).
- Vernière** P. Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution* (Paris, 1954; repr. Geneva, 1979).
- Wundt** M. Wundt, *Die deutsche Schulphilosophie im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Tübingen, 1945; repr. Hildesheim, 1964).

**Part I**

**The History of Philosophy and the *histoire  
de l'esprit humain* in France Between the  
Encyclopaedia and the Revolution**

# Chapter 1

## The History of Philosophy in the *Encyclopédie*

Gregorio Piaia

### Introduction

In his famous course on the history of literature, Jean-François de La Harpe drew a general picture of the *siècle philosophique* which had come to an end after the terrible events of the previous century. In doing so, he showed an awareness of the value of the not merely chronological transition from the first to the second half of the eighteenth century. “The mid-eighteenth century”, he observed, “was marked by three great undertakings: the *Esprit des lois*, the *Histoire naturelle*, and the *Encyclopédie*, three memorable achievements published almost simultaneously, but very different in character, even though they all belonged to the *esprit philosophique*, the development and various effects of which I wish to describe here” (*Lycée*, ed. 1799–1805, XV, p. 71; on this work, see below, Chap. 3, Introd., b). Indeed, the publication of Montesquieu’s *Esprit des lois* in 1748, Buffon’s *Histoire naturelle* (from 1749 to 1788), and the first two volumes of the *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* in 1751–1752, represented a crucial turning point in the history of modern culture. This observation applies especially to the encyclopaedia, the cultural significance of which was carefully highlighted by La Harpe: “If there is something that appears to be particularly suited to foster in man the self-esteem proper to him, this is without doubt the simple plan of a work like the *Encyclopédie*”, the aim of which was “to provide a substantial presentation of everything that the human mind had conceived, discovered, and created since the very first establishment of social groups” (*Lycée*, XV, p. 84).

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It has been rightly stated that the *Encyclopédie* is “the materialised ‘history of the human mind’” (Dagen, p. 439). A ‘history’ that is not definitive but can be used as a basis for registering the future achievements of man. Indeed, in his *Prospectus*, published in November 1750 and later included in the *Discours préliminaire*, Diderot hopes that posterity “will add its discoveries to those we have already registered, and the history of the human mind and its creations will be able to reach the remotest centuries, age by age” (Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes* [= OC]. Paris, 1975 ff., V, pp. 98–99). Unlike the great encyclopaedias of the past (such as Vincent of Beauvais’ *Speculum maius*, compiled around the middle of the thirteenth century, or Alsted’s seventeenth-century *Encyclopaedia*), this *histoire de l’esprit humain* not only aimed to collect the knowledge of an epoch in an orderly manner, but also intended to act as a medium for transmitting a new conception of man and nature, in contrast to official culture and the political and ecclesiastical institutions. The cultural, but also ethical and civil, commitment that imbued the encyclopaedists emerges from the definition given by Diderot: “For the purpose of an encyclopaedia is to collect the knowledge scattered around the earth, to describe its general system to our contemporaries, and transmit it to posterity, so that the work done during the past centuries will be of advantage for future centuries; so that our grandchildren, in becoming more cultivated, may also become more virtuous and happy; and so that we shall not die without having amply benefited mankind” (article ‘Encyclopédie’, OC, VII, p. 174; cf. below, Chap. 9, p. 519, note 3).

In its early stage, the *Encyclopédie* had been envisaged as a commercial rather than a cultural venture: a French version of Chambers’ *Cyclopaedia* (1728; see below, Chap. 7, pp. 408–409), which had been planned by the Parisian publisher Le Breton in 1745. But thanks to Diderot and D’Alembert, who took charge of its editing in 1747, this initiative turned into the greatest cultural and ‘philosophical’ undertaking of the eighteenth century. Let us briefly recall the different phases of the project. The original phase extended to the crisis of 1752 and involved some of the early collaborators on the *Encyclopédie*. The opposition of the Jesuits and the party of the *dévots* brought about the revocation of the exclusive right to print and a ban on the two volumes already published, which were blamed for spreading corruption and unbelief and for threatening royal authority. The work was allowed to appear again in November 1753, but not before the text had been controlled by three theologians of the Sorbonne. This was the beginning of what has been called the “age of the Encyclopaedia”: between 1753 and 1756, volumes III–VI were published and its contributors included renowned personalities like Voltaire and Montesquieu; by this time a substantial number of readers were subscribing to the work.

Around the end of the 1750s the general climate again became hostile to the *Encyclopédie* as a consequence two major events: the Seven Years’ War, which set France against Frederick II of Prussia, an admirer of Diderot and D’Alembert; and an attempt on Louis XV’s life at the beginning of 1757, which resulted in restrictions on the press. A new crisis was provoked by the virulent polemics of its opponents, the reactions to D’Alembert’s article “Genève” (contained in volume VII, which came out in the autumn of 1757), and above all the publication of Helvétius’ *De l’Esprit* (1758). The crisis was only exacerbated by the differences which emerged

between the encyclopaedists themselves. D'Alembert withdrew from the project, and in January 1759 the Paris Parliament ordered the suspension of the sale of the *Encyclopédie*, blamed for having provided Helvétius' work with its inspiring principles; on the 8th March, a royal condemnation was formally made public and the exclusive permission to print was again revoked.

But Diderot continued to edit and print the remaining ten volumes clandestinely, with the help of a limited number of collaborators who had remained faithful, notably Louis de Jaucourt. These volumes were distributed in 1765, when complaints from subscribers and booksellers, together with a more favourable political climate, induced the government authorities to accept a compromise: the volumes appeared without the names of the editors and with a false indication of the place of publication ("Neuchâtel"), as if they had been published in Switzerland and then imported into France. The publication of the 11 illustrated volumes took place in 1772; the work was completed in 1780 and included four volumes of supplements, two volumes of indices and one of additional engravings (repr. of the 1 ed.: Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1967; Milan, 1970–1980). The *Encyclopédie* was published again in Lucca (1758–1776), Livorno (1770–1778), Geneva (1771–1776), Geneva-Neuchâtel (1777–1779), and Lausanne-Bern (1778–1782). The Lucca edition was supported by Ottaviano Diodati and contained notes written in collaboration with Giovan Domenico Mansi. After the papal edict of 3rd September 1759 which condemned all editions of the *Encyclopédie*, even those containing emending notes, the work continued to appear but the place of publication was omitted.

Within the general framework of the achievements of the *esprit humain*, which the encyclopaedists intended to present in an organic *tableau*, the history of philosophy takes a prominent position, and it became an opportunity for testing the speculative and ideological views of the two major protagonists, Diderot and D'Alembert. Indeed, D'Alembert's *Discours préliminaire*, with its mixture of theoretical observations and historiographical theories, is an obligatory point of reference for French historiography in the second-half of the eighteenth century. As for the entries concerning the history of philosophy, these were initially assigned to contributors of modest rank (the abbés Yvon, Pestré, Prades, and Mallet). After the crisis of 1752 and the death of Mallet in 1755, the field remained empty and Diderot himself took up the task, while D'Alembert contributed to the entries regarding the mathematical sciences. This historiographical activity might seem a mere makeshift solution induced by circumstances, but, in practice, it gave rise to a historiography of a philosophical nature which, despite the fragmentation caused by the alphabetical structure of the *Encyclopédie*, is of a unitary nature. Indeed it is not accidental that the entries on the history of philosophy were soon collected and published separately under a title which is significant for us, the *Histoire générale des dogmes et opinions philosophiques depuis les plus anciens temps jusqu'à nos jours* (Londres [Bouillon?], 1769, 3 Vols). In compiling a list of Diderot's works, Naigeon (who, as we shall see below, was responsible for the systemization of the parts of the *Encyclopédie* devoted to the history of philosophy) placed at its head a *Histoire critique de la philosophie* (Dieckmann, *Inventaire du fonds Vandeul*, p. 167).

Basing ourselves on critical literature, our intention here is to present the picture of the history of philosophy, together with its theoretical foundations, which emerges from the *Encyclopédie* considered as a whole. To this end, after the bibliographical profiles of those encyclopaedists who were responsible for the articles concerning the history of philosophy, the treatment will be divided into two parts: the first will be devoted to the *Discours préliminaire*, with reference to other writings by D'Alembert; and the second will examine the articles on the history of philosophy in the *Encyclopédie*, following our usual framework.

## 1.1 The Team of Collaborators

### 1.1.1 Denis Diderot (1713–1784)

**1.1.1.1** Denis Diderot was born in Langres on 5th October, 1713 into an affluent family of craftsmen. He was educated by the Jesuits, and was at first destined for an ecclesiastical career. After completing his studies in Paris to become a *maître ès arts* (1732), however, he gave up the religious habit and lived as an indigent scholar, giving private lessons, writing sermons for money, and translating from English. In 1743 he married the daughter of a linen and lace dealer and had four children (three of whom died at a tender age). Employed together with D'Alembert to lead the enterprise of the *Encyclopédie*, he received an income of 1,200 livres which finally freed him from poverty. The publication of a number of anti-religious works made the authorities suspicious of him, and from July to November 1749 he was imprisoned in the tower of Vincennes. Once freed, he spent many years totally absorbed by the *Encyclopédie*, the 'Prospectus' of which he published in 1750. His marriage soon deteriorated: at first he was involved in a liaison with Mme de Puisieux, then, in 1756, he fell in love with Louise-Henriette-Sophie Volland, the daughter of a tax collector. His letters to her, dating from 1759 to 1774, are reckoned among his masterpieces. In 1773 he travelled to Russia and stayed at the court of Catherine II, who had previously bought his library (though letting him enjoy it until his death), and granted him an income of 1,000 livres a year. He returned to Paris in 1774, where he died on 31st July, 1784.

**1.1.1.2** Diderot's vast literary production appeared mostly posthumously, and it ranges from philosophical essays to literary correspondence, erotic novels, and drama. We shall limit ourselves here, however, to the more strictly philosophical works. After the *Essai sur le mérite et la vertu* (1745), a translation from Shaftesbury, in 1746 came the publication of the *Pensées philosophiques* (immediately burnt by the Parliament because of their anti-Christian contents), and in the following year *Les allées, ou la promenade du sceptique*. This latter is an allegorical work tending towards atheism, which already shows Diderot's specific interest in the philosophical doctrines of the past, and it can be considered to be the immediate

precursor of the articles on the history of philosophy in the *Encyclopédie*. While this work for the *Encyclopédie* is like “a walk in the real world of philosophy, *Les allées* lead the reader into the imaginary museum of philosophical ideas. However, just like a novel, history is above all a convenient basis to support the philosopher’s personal ideas” (Proust, p. 233). In 1749 his famous *Lettre sur les aveugles, à l’usage de ceux qui voient* was published, which led to his imprisonment in Vincennes. His *Pensées sur l’interprétation de la nature*, printed in 1753, urge a rigorously experimental method of investigation, against all forms of speculative thought, and provide a key to the interpretation of the work on the history of philosophy to which Diderot was to devote himself during the following years.

The year 1769 saw the publication of the *Entretien entre Diderot et D’Alembert*, the *Rêve de D’Alembert* (published only in 1830), and the *Suite de l’entretien*; these were followed by *Pensées philosophiques sur la matière et le mouvement* (1770), the *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (1772, publ. in 1796), the *Réfutation d’Helvétius* (1773–1774, publ. only in 1875), the *Entretien d’un philosophe avec le maréchal de \*\*\** (1776), and the *Éléments de physiologie* (1774–1778). The first edition of Diderot’s *Oeuvres complètes*, in 15 Vols, was printed by Naigeon in 1798; another, more complete edition was edited by J. Assézat and M. Tournoux (Paris, 1875–1879, 20 Vols). A critical edition in 34 volumes is now being prepared by a team of scholars directed by H. Dieckmann, J. Proust, J. Varloot, and others (Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris, Hermann, 1975 ff., hereafter abbreviated to OC). Volumes V–VIII (1976), edited by J. Lough and J. Proust, contain the articles on various subjects written by Diderot for the *Encyclopédie*.

As regards the articles on the history of philosophy, it should be noted that in some cases the problem of the possible attribution to Diderot is still unresolved. A first list of these articles was compiled by Mme de Vandeuil, his daughter, and, together with the additions integrated into a later list, it includes 72 entries (Dieckmann, *Inventaire du fonds Vandeuil*, pp. 172–173 and 176–177), which should be reduced to 70 because ‘Scythes’, ‘Thraces’, and ‘Gètes’ are not three separate entries but constitute only one. However, Proust has remarked that about 15 of these articles were in fact written by other contributors, and he has drawn up a new list in which the articles actually written by Diderot amount to 54 (Proust, pp. 127–128 and 550–557). However this list does not seem to be definitive either, for it could also include, for example, the short article ‘Spinosiste’ (the entry on ‘Spinoza’ is not by Diderot) or ‘Hylopathianisme’, ‘Métempsychose’, and ‘Origénistes’, which can be absorbed into the history of philosophy and have been ascribed to Diderot (cf. R.L. Frautschi, ‘The Authorship of Certain Unsigned Articles in the Encyclopédie’, *Computer Studies in the Humanities and Verbal Behaviour*, III, 1970, pp. 66–76). Moreover, we should consider that some articles (‘Machiavélisme’, ‘Pyrrhonienne’, ‘Pythagorisme’, ‘Sarrasins’, ‘Socratique’) were censored at the proof stage by the publisher Le Breton because they were judged to be too audacious; the primitive texts of these articles have been re-established by D.E. Gordon, N.L. Torrey, *The Censoring of Diderot’s Encyclopédie and the Re-established Text* (New York, 1947), and are quoted in the *Oeuvres complètes*.

The articles on the history of philosophy were written between 1751 and 1762. Diderot's work became particularly impressive, both quantitatively and qualitatively, starting with the article "Eclectisme", which is dated 11th February, 1755. By the end of 1759 most of the articles seem to have been completed. Echoes of this historiographical activity appear throughout the letters sent to Sophie Volland during that period. On 14th October, for example, Diderot relates a conversation with D'Alembert in which he announces triumphantly to his former co-editor that all the articles on philosophy have been completed, "which are neither the least difficult nor the shortest ones" (Diderot, *Correspondance*, II (*Décembre 1757–Novembre 1759*), ed. G. Roth, Paris, 1956, no. 150, p. 273). This is evidently an exaggeration, because on 1st November he wrote to Sophie saying that only three articles still had to be written, "but long and difficult ones, namely, the analyses of Platonism and Pythagoreanism, together with the history of philosophy among the Etruscans and the Romans" (*Correspondance*, II, no. 155, p. 309). In this period, Diderot had just finished the article on the philosophy of the Saracens, of which he had spoken at length – back from a Sunday walk – in the drawing-room of the château de Grandval, where he was a guest of Baron d'Holbach. He relates this pleasant conversation in a letter to Sophie dated 30th October (pp. 295–305). His interest in the exotic philosophies he was dealing with in this period is here counterbalanced by his regret for the absence of his beloved: "These, my friend", Diderot observes after dwelling on the Arabs, "are those with whom I am conversing these days. I was previously with the Phoenicians; earlier with the inhabitants of Malabar; still earlier, with the Indians. I have seen all the wisdom of nations, and I have thought that it is not worth the sweet madness that my friend inspires in me. I have heard their sublime discourses, and I have thought that one single word from the lips of my friend would give my soul an emotion they could never give me" (p. 316).

## 1.1.2 Jean D'Alembert (1717–1783)

**1.1.2.1** Jean Le Rond, known as D'Alembert, was born in Paris on 16th November, 1717. A foundling (he was the illegitimate child of the renowned Mme de Tencin and an army officer), he was brought up by the wife of a glassmaker, with whom he lived until the age of 47. He successfully completed his studies at the *Collège des Quatre Nations*, and then devoted himself to mathematical research; by 1741 he had been admitted to the *Académie des sciences* as an *adjoint* in the section of astronomy. A spirited conversationalist, he was welcomed into the *salons* of Mme Geoffrin and Mme du Deffand, who supported his election to the *Académie française* (1754), where he became permanent secretary in 1772. He had previously declined an invitation from Frederick II to succeed Maupertuis as President of the Berlin Academy (1752). This refusal was not only due to reasons of health but also to his wish to preserve his independence and his need to carry on the publication of

the *Encyclopédie*, the *Discours préliminaire* of which he published on the 1st July, 1751. Extremely susceptible to criticism, by the beginning of 1758 he had already decided to withdraw from work on the *Encyclopédie*. In 1762 he declined Catherine II's invitation to collaborate in the education of the heir to the throne, the future tsar Paul I; nevertheless, the empress named him a member of the Academy of Sciences of Petersburg. In 1755 and 1763, for short periods of time he was the guest of Frederick II. During his final years he attended the *salons* of Mme Helvétius, Mme Necker, and Condorcet, whom he named his universal legatee. He died in Paris on 29th October, 1783.

**1.1.2.2** “He was famous for being the author of several of those great discoveries that guarantee to the century in which they have been disclosed the honour of constituting an epoch in the eternal series of centuries . . .”: with these words Condorcet brings to an end his *Éloge de D’Alembert* pronounced before the *Académie des sciences* (*Oeuvres de D’Alembert*, ed. 1821–1822, I, p. xxviii). Indeed, the publication of the *Traité de dynamique* (1743) represented an event in the history of the sciences. It was followed by other scientific works: *Traité de l’équilibre des fluides*, *Réflexions sur la cause générale des vents* (1744), *Recherches sur les cordes vibrantes* (1747), *Recherches sur la précession des équinoxes* (1749), *Recherches sur différents points importants du système du monde* (1754–1756), and *Opuscules mathématiques* (1761–1780). In the strictly philosophical field, D’Alembert wrote the *Essai sur les éléments de philosophie, ou sur les principes des connaissances humaines* (1759); and we can also mention the *Mélanges de littérature, d’histoire et de philosophie* (1753), the *Eclaircissements sur la destruction des Jésuites* (1765), and the *Histoire des membres de l’Académie Française morts depuis 1700 jusqu’en 1771* (1785–1787). An edition of his philosophical and historical works was published in 18 volumes in Paris between 1805 and 1808; and a new edition in 5 tomes was published again in Paris in 1821–1822 (repr. Geneva, 1967). The *Oeuvres et correspondances inédites* appeared in Paris in 1887 (repr. Geneva, 1967). The new general edition is the *Oeuvres complètes de D’Alembert*, ed. Groupe D’Alembert (Paris, 2002–); cf. A.-M. Chouillet, F. De Gandt, and I. Passeron, ‘L’édition des *Oeuvres complètes de D’Alembert* (1717–1783)’, *Gazette des Mathématiciens*, LXXVII (January 1998), pp. 59–71. The *Discours préliminaire* (1751, repeatedly reprinted inside the *Mélanges de littérature, d’histoire et de philosophie*) was soon translated into English under the title *The Plan of the French Encyclopaedia, or Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Trades and Manufactures* (London, 1752). Here we use the following modern translation: *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopaedia of Diderot*, by R.N. Schwab and W.E. Rex (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1963; Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1995 – <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0001.083>). In addition to the *Discours préliminaire*, D’Alembert wrote for the *Encyclopédie* the ‘Avertissement’ to volume III and the articles ‘Copernic’, ‘École (philosophie de l’)', ‘Égoïstes’, ‘Éléments des sciences’, ‘Érudition’, ‘Expérimental’, ‘Newtonianisme’; he also contributed to the entries ‘Cabale’ and ‘Cartésianisme’, and revised the scientific articles.

### 1.1.3 The Secondary Collaborators

Among the other scholars who collaborated on the *Encyclopédie*, the most active editors of the articles concerning the history of philosophy were the abbés Yvon and Pestré. Claude Yvon (1715–1791), an ecclesiastic who was tolerant to the point of naivety, was a supporter of enlightened Catholicism (a “théologien philosophe”, as D’Alembert himself defined him). Implicated in the de Prades case, he left Paris in February 1752 and lived in Holland for 10 years. Once back in France, he obtained a canonry in Coutances and was appointed historiographer to the count of Artois. Among his works, let us mention *La liberté de conscience resserrée dans ses bornes légitimes* (Londres, 1754), the *Accord de la philosophie avec la religion* (Paris, 1776–1782, 2 Vols), and the *Histoire philosophique de la religion* (Liège, 1779, 2 Vols). He was entrusted with those articles of the *Encyclopédie* that concerned history and the history of philosophy, but it is difficult to compile a precise list of his contributions because after the first two volumes his name did not appear by the article, even though he continued to collaborate. We know that he did write the entries ‘Âme’, ‘Athées’, ‘Bien’, ‘Bon’, ‘Immatérialisme’, ‘Liberté’ . . . ; and as for the history of philosophy, the articles ‘Académiciens’, ‘Aristotélisme’, ‘Atomisme’, ‘Barbares’, ‘Celts’, and probably ‘Spinoza’. We know very little about abbé Pestré, who died in 1821 at the old age of 98. Open to Enlightenment ideas, he collaborated on the first two volumes of the *Encyclopédie* in the fields of morals (see in particular ‘Bonheur’) and the history of philosophy (articles ‘Bacon’, ‘Cabale’, ‘Campanella’, ‘Canadiens’, ‘Cardan’, ‘Cartésianisme’).

In the *Discours préliminaire*, the authors of articles on the history of philosophy also include abbé Jean-Martin de Prades (c. 1720–1782), who was at the centre of a theological scandal. The thesis he had brought before the Sorbonne around the end of 1751 was censored because it maintained heterodox positions, and the Paris Parliament ordered the arrest of its author. Once he had fled to Holland, de Prades published an *Apologie* (the third and final part of which was written by Diderot). Thanks to the intervention of Voltaire and the marquis d’Argens, he was appointed lector to the king of Prussia, and he went to Potsdam where he obtained a pension and two canonries. In Berlin he published the *Abrégé de l’histoire ecclésiastique de Fleury* (1767), the preface of which was full of invective against the Christian religion, and was written by Frederick II. Another ecclesiastic, abbé Edme Mallet (1713–1755), a professor of theology at the *Collège de Navarre* and the author of works on literature (*Principes pour la lecture des poètes*, 1745; *Essai sur l’étude des belles-lettres*, 1747 . . . ) was responsible for a number of articles on the history of philosophy, such as ‘Académie’, ‘Cabalistes’, and ‘Démon de Socrate’. Further articles and material on the same discipline were sent to the *Encyclopédie* by Samuel Formey (‘Atomisme’, ‘Corpusculaire’, ‘Exotérique’, ‘Trinité philosophique’), who in 1760 was to publish a *Histoire abrégée de la philosophie* in Amsterdam (see below, Sect. 8.1). Finally, let us note that the articles ‘Nombres’ and ‘Platoniciens et Aristotéliens (guerre littéraire entre les)’ were written by the chevalier de Jaucourt (1704–1779), who had already written a biography of Leibniz appended

to an edition of the *Essai de Théodicée* (Amsterdam, 1734). The anonymous article ‘Philosophe’ is taken from a work attributed to César Chesneau Dumarsais (or Du Marsais, 1676–1756) who had defended Fontenelle’s *Histoire des oracles* and had written famous works on logic, such as the *Traité des tropes* (1730) and the *Logique et principes de grammaire* (1769).

## 1.2 The History of Philosophy in the *Discours préliminaire*

**1.2.1** The *Discours préliminaire* consists of two clearly distinct parts: a theoretical part (the “*metaphysical* analysis of the origin and connection of the sciences”, followed by an “encyclopaedic tree”, that is to say, a classification of the various sciences), and a historical part, which shows “by what steps” we have reached the “present state of the sciences and the arts” (*Preliminary Discourse*, ed. 1963, p. 60; cf. *Oeuvres de D’Alembert*, ed. 1821–1822, I, p. 54). In this “*historical* analysis of the order in which our knowledge has developed in successive steps” the history of philosophy has a central position. Before examining the latter, however, it is worth looking at the implications of a historiographical nature present in the theoretical part of the *Discours*.

Using Bacon’s three-fold division of the human faculties and knowledge (memory, reason, and imagination, which correspond to history, philosophy, and the fine arts) D’Alembert places the history of philosophy in that section of the “history of man” (the “literary history”) whose object is “knowledge” and which deals with “great geniuses, men of letters, and philosophers”; “civil history”, on the other hand, has “actions” as its object and deals with “great nations”, “kings”, and “conquerors” (*Prelim. Disc.*, p. 53; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, p. 48). Indeed in the *Système général de la connaissance humaine suivant le chancelier Bacon* (reproduced in the *Observations sur la division des sciences du chancelier Bacon* written by Diderot in response to the accusations of plagiarism formulated by the Jesuit Berthier and contained in volume I of the *Encyclopédie*), the historiography of philosophy appears to be divided between the sphere of history (“Section of that part of history concerned with the remarkable sayings uttered by men, in letters and apothegms”) and the sphere of philosophy (“Branches of speculative philosophy consisting of natural problems, as well as the sentiments of the ancient philosophers”) because, according to Bacon, reference to the opinions of the ancients is an “appendix” to the study of natural philosophy (OC, V, pp. 127–128; cf. *Models*, I, pp. 163–168).

Bacon’s division of the history of philosophy into two different fields created a theoretical version of the traditional distinction between the “lives and sayings” and the doxography of the philosophers, but it contrasted with the unitary perspective of the *historia philosophica* which had long established itself, even though Brucker had distinguished between a *historia personarum* and a *historia doctrinarum* (see *Models*, II, pp. 536–537). But it was above all the equation, memory = history = erudition (in which memory was described as “the purely passive and almost mechanical collection of knowledge”: *Prelim. Disc.*, p. 50)



that was difficult to reconcile with the new 'philosophical' conception of history which D'Alembert thoroughly embraced. The problematic nature of the creation of a history of philosophy, which is caused by the association two activities which are not homogeneous because they derive from two different faculties, 'memory' and 'reason', does not seem to have been explicitly perceived here. Nevertheless, the epistemological need for a *reductio ad unum* emerges a little later, in a discourse with variations which reveal the inadequacy of Bacon's framework as a basis of reference. Initially D'Alembert observes that the three-fold division of the faculties and knowledge has the following "advantage": "it could provide the three divisions of the literary world into Scholars, Philosophers, and *beaux esprits*, so that, after having formed the tree of the sciences, we could construct the tree of men of letters on the same pattern. Memory is the talent of the first [group]; wisdom belongs to the second; and the last have pleasure as their portion" (*Prelim. Disc.*, pp. 55–56; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 50–51).

The different roles seem to be well-defined here, but a certain unification immediately appears on the basis of the common denominator of *réflexion* (originating with Locke), in which not only reason but also memory (whose proper object seems to be "direct ideas") and imagination participated: "Thus, if one considers memory as a beginning of reflection and adds to it the reflection that combines and the reflection that imitates, it could be said in general that the differences which exist between men are determined by the variation in the number and nature of each man's reflective ideas. One could also say that reflection, taken in the broadest sense that one can give it, forms the character of the intelligence and distinguishes its different types". But this move towards unification is countered by the presence of the hostile incommunicability that seems to prevail among modern historians, philosophers, and artists, who "normally have nothing in common, except the lack of esteem in which they hold one another. The poet and the philosopher treat each other as madmen who feed on fancies. Both regard the scholar as a sort of miser who thinks only of amassing without enjoying, and who indiscriminately heaps up the basest metals along with the most precious. And the scholar, who considers everything which is not fact to be idle words, holds the poet and the philosopher in contempt as being men who think they are rich because their expenses exceed their resources". Yet, even when confronted with these contrasts sanctioned by general opinion, D'Alembert does not give up the idea of an interconnection between the three great spheres of human activity, especially as far as history is concerned: "Undoubtedly society owes its principal enjoyments to *beaux esprits* and its enlightenment to philosophers, but neither of them appreciates how much they owe to memory. Memory includes the primary material of all our knowledge, and the works of the scholars have often furnished the subjects upon which the philosopher and the poet exercise their skills" (*Prelim. Disc.*, p. 56; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, p. 51).

The demand for unity is much more consistent in the *Encyclopédie* article 'Éléments des sciences', where D'Alembert reduces "to only one group, that of the sciences strictly speaking", the three groups in which human knowledge had been placed (history, the liberal and mechanical arts, and the sciences). As for history, its object is either nature or the thoughts or actions of men. "The history

of nature, the object of the philosopher's meditation, falls within the class of the sciences; the same can be said of the history of the thoughts of men, especially if this name embraces only those thoughts that are really enlightened and useful and, moreover, are the only ones to be offered to the readers of a book of elements. As for the history of kings, conquerors, and peoples, that is to say, of those events that have transformed and disrupted the world, it can be the object of the philosopher's attention only insofar as it is not restricted to mere facts". Hence, after mentioning this 'philosophical' conception of history (which he was to develop in particular in his speech before the *Académie Française* on 19th January, 1761),<sup>1</sup> D'Alembert concludes that "history therefore belongs to the group of the sciences with respect to the way of studying it and making it useful, that is to say, with respect to its *philosophical part*" (*Encyclopédie*, vol. V, 1755, p. 216; the italics are mine).

The concept of a "history of enlightened and useful thoughts" could be compared to the "critical history of philosophy" elaborated by Deslandes and Brucker, and then developed according to the requirements of the encyclopaedists. Let us note, however, that D'Alembert does not use the term 'history of philosophy' in his theoretical reflections, even though it had long been part of the canon of disciplines. What are the reasons for this omission? The author of the *Discours préliminaire* probably judged the history of philosophy to be too limited a discipline, inevitably linked to its learned origins, and he preferred the wider notion of the *histoire de l'esprit humain*, following a tendency which – as we shall see in the next chapter – was widespread in French historiography of the time. In this respect, it is worth looking at chapter II of the *Essai sur les éléments de philosophie*, in which the *Encyclopédie* article 'Éléments des sciences' was reworked and developed. Here the prevailing idea of the history of philosophy as a history of truths and mistakes is employed within the perspective of a "general and reasoned history of the sciences and the arts". There are four "major objects" of this general history of human culture: "our knowledge, our opinions, our controversies, and our mistakes", and these four objects appear to give rise to just as many 'histories', whose features and aims are thus described:

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<sup>1</sup>D'Alembert, *Réflexions sur l'histoire, et sur les différentes manières de l'écrire*, in *Oeuvres*, II, pp. 1–10, where mention is also made of Malebranche's aversion to historical knowledge (cf. *Models*, II, p. 4). Those who denigrate the study of history are contrasted in particular with the attitude of the "wise and moderate philosopher", who "reads history [...] in order to seek in the annals of the world the precious traces, however weak and scarce, of the efforts made by the human mind as well as the far more conspicuous traces of the dedication with which attempts have been made in all ages to repress it" (p. 3). But the link between history and philosophy and the consequent assertion of the usefulness of a history that is not mere erudition are a theme that recurs in D'Alembert's writings: "When the science of history", he writes at the beginning of *Mémoires et réflexions sur Christine, reine de Suède* (1752), "is not enlightened by philosophy it is the last form of human knowledge. Its study would be more interesting if the history of men had been written a little more and the history of princes a little less because the latter is in great measure nothing other than the pomp of vice and weakness. And it becomes much worse when it is mixed with a multitude of facts even less worthy of being known [...]. It would be desirable for an abstract to be made of the really useful historical facts every hundred years, and the rest be burned" (*Oeuvres*, II, p. 119).

“The *history of our knowledge* reveals to us our richness, or rather our true indigence. On one hand, it humiliates man by showing him how little he knows; on the other hand, it elevates and encourages him, or at least comforts him, by throwing light on the several ways in which he has managed to use a small number of clear and certain notions. The *history of our opinions* shows how men, at times out of necessity and at other times out of impatience, replaced truth with *verisimilitude*, with more or less successful results. It shows us how that which was at first only probable later became true, after it was repeatedly revised, deepened, and in a sense purified by the works that followed over many centuries; it provides our discernment and that of our descendants with facts to be verified, points of view to be followed, conjectures to be developed more profoundly, merely incipient knowledge to be made more perfect. The *history of our controversies* shows the misuse of words and nebulous notions, the advance of the sciences slowed down by nominalisms (*par des questions de nom*), passions masked as fervour, stubbornness under the name of firmness [ . . . ]. This study, indeed the least useful for increasing our real knowledge, should be the most suitable for making us wise; but in this regard, just as in all other regards, the example of others is always wasted on us. Finally, the *history of our mistakes* – the most remarkable ones because of their resemblance to truth, their duration, and the number and importance of those seduced by them – teaches us to mistrust ourselves and others; moreover, by showing us the paths which made us depart from truth, it makes it easier for us to seek the right path leading to it” (*Oeuvres*, I, pp. 124–125; the italics are mine).

The text continues by emphasising the educational function of error, which goes far beyond the mere individual and takes on a dimension of cultural and civil regeneration that brings to mind Condorcet’s words: “Those nations that are still restrained in darkness by the yoke of superstition and despotism will one day – provided they finally manage to break their chains – take advantage of those contradictions to which all kinds of truths have been submitted by us; enlightened by our example, they will instantly overcome the immense number of mistakes and prejudices in which a thousand obstacles have constrained us for many centuries, and will all of a sudden pass from the deepest darkness to the true philosophy we have been able to touch only slowly and fleetingly” (I, p. 125).

However, in the eyes of the scientist D’Alembert (whose orientation was with good reason defined as ‘positivistic’), the four-fold division presented above loses ground in favour of an exaltation of the history of the true forms of knowledge which have gradually constituted scientific knowledge and, compared to which, the history of opinions, controversies, and mistakes becomes totally incidental or is reduced to mere expedient. Indeed, nothing is more enlightening and “more worthy of being handed down to our descendants than the framework of our real knowledge; it is the history and praise of the human mind; the rest is nothing but novel or satire. This framework alone is rendered unalterable by the mark of truth, whereas the other ones change or disappear. It even seems as though the other three objects, albeit highly useful, are nothing but a sort of remedy we turn to when a more stable good is lacking. The more light is gained on a subject, the less one is concerned with the false and doubtful opinions it has produced; only when there is a lack of stable,

bright ideas, on which we can pause, do we try to apprehend the history of that which was thought by men: through this true or false appearance of knowledge we try to compensate as much as possible for truthful science. For this reason the history of sophisms is very short in mathematics and very long in philosophy. Nothing, therefore, would prove more useful than a work containing not that which has been thought through all the centuries, but rather that which has been thought and is true” (I, pp. 125–126).

In reality, this “history of true thoughts” has little that is historical, and it comes closer to being a work of scientific systemization. D’Alembert’s aim here is not to produce a history of the sciences, of the same kind as the *Histoire des mathématiques* published in the same period (1758) by Montucla (on whom see below, Chap. 2, Introd., e). Indeed, he makes it clear that “what matters is not to collect that huge amount of particular, isolated, and often sterile knowledge acquired by men on every subject; what matters is certainly not to show in detail the long, weary, winding path followed by the inventors”. Following his epistemological model based on the “economy of principles”, he aims at “defining and collecting the principles of our certain knowledge; at presenting the fundamental truths from one point of view; at reducing the objects of each particular science to some major and clearly distinct points, so as to follow them more easily” (I, p. 126).

D’Alembert, therefore, seems to oscillate between resolving the history of thought into a systematic collection of principles, and acknowledging that historical knowledge has a true function. Even in the *Essai sur les éléments de philosophie*, which has a rigorously speculative structure, much space is devoted to a number of short but significant historical *excursuses*. Indeed D’Alembert declares explicitly that in the *Encyclopédie* the “science of facts” (that is to say, the “knowledge acquired by men through reading and society”) coexists with the “science of things”, which is made up of the knowledge men “obtain by themselves with their own reflections”. This is made clear in the ‘Avertissement’ or ‘Préface’ to volume III, which allows us to verify the ideas that govern the *Encyclopédie*. The work, reiterates D’Alembert, has the purpose of “presenting not only the real progress made by human knowledge but occasionally also that which has slowed down this progress. Everything is useful in literature, even the role of the historian of the thoughts elaborated by others”.

In this context, it should be noted that a justification is given for the articles on the history of philosophy: after pointing out that the *Encyclopédie* intends to distinguish itself “primarily for its philosophical spirit”, D’Alembert remarks that “some are astonished – without good reason – to find in it articles on philosophers and not on the Church Fathers; there is a considerable difference between them. The former were creators of opinions, sometimes good, sometimes bad; but our framework compels us to deal with them [ . . . ]. On the contrary, the Church Fathers, who were entrusted with the precious and inviolable heritage of faith and tradition, were not able nor were they obliged to teach men anything new concerning the important subjects they dealt with”. Hence the lives of the saints, just like the genealogies of the great families, have been excluded from this dictionary which is devoted to the “genealogy of the sciences, something more precious for those who are capable of

thinking". The sovereigns themselves are named here only if they have favoured the development of the sciences, because, remarks D'Alembert in the proud tone of the intellectual, "the *Encyclopédie* owes everything to talents, nothing to titles, and it represents the history of the human mind, not of the vanity of human beings" (*Oeuvres*, IV, pp. 388–389 and 394).

**1.2.2** It is in the light of these theoretical considerations that we can define more precisely the "philosophical history of the advance of the human mind starting from the rebirth of letters", the definition of the second part of the *Discours préliminaire* as stated in the 'Avertissement' (*Oeuvres*, I, p. 15). The historical treatment contained in the *Discours préliminaire* follows the order in which the human mind has "naturally" progressed, starting with the "renaissance of letters", and it has the following characteristics: it limits itself to the modern age, albeit with significant references to the past; it emphasises the "small number of great geniuses whose works have helped to spread enlightenment among men", while only mentioning other thinkers, even when they have the stature of someone like Galileo; and it omits bibliographical facts and doctrinal contents in their specific subdivisions, in order to clarify instead the 'philosophical' meaning of an author. This 'philosophical' meaning is the *révolution* he brought about and the contribution he made to the development of a "reasonable metaphysics" and a "true systematic spirit", which is the opposite of the *esprit de système* and corresponds in practice to the experimental method (*Prelim. Disc.*, pp. 22–23 and 60; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 28 and 54).

This "historical order of the progress of the mind" (which "began with erudition, continued with belles-lettres, and ended with philosophy") differs from the "metaphysical order of the operations of the mind", that is to say, the "natural progress" of the human faculties, in which the development of reason precedes that of the imagination. This is because "the primitive generation of ideas" which takes place in individuals left to themselves and their own faculties, does not correspond to the historical stages of "the regeneration of ideas" which took place at "the end of that long period of ignorance [the Middle Ages, when "the principles of the sciences and the arts" had been lost] that had been preceded by centuries of enlightenment" (*Prelim. Disc.*, pp. 47, 60 and 76; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 47, 54 and 65).

In his historical reconstruction, D'Alembert accepts the negative verdict on the Middle Ages, which, according to the prevailing *topos*, were defined as "the centuries of ignorance", "the unhappy times", or the "dark times". It is true, there were geniuses like Gerbert of Aurillac, because "nature is always the same", but they lacked the support of a cultural and social background. "Slavery" and "superstition" hampered "the return of reason and taste". As for philosophy, the medievals "mistook for the true philosophy of the ancients a barbarous tradition which disfigured it", while "the careful investigation of nature and the great study of mankind were replaced by a thousand frivolous questions concerning abstract, metaphysical beings". The turning point came with the great "revolution" that was the fall of Byzantium and the ensuing flow of learned Byzantines to the West. Thanks to the invention of printing and the patronage of the Medici in Florence

and Francis I in France, “light was reborn everywhere” and the study of language and history was resumed. Indeed, “on emerging from barbarism, the human mind found itself in a sort of infancy. It was eager to accumulate ideas, but incapable at first of acquiring those of a higher order because of the kind of sluggishness in which the faculties of the soul had been immersed for so long”. Memory, not reason, was the first of these faculties to be reawakened, “because it is the easiest to satisfy and because the knowledge that is obtained with its help can be built up most easily. Thus they did not begin by studying nature as the first men had had to do. They enjoyed an advantage which the earliest men lacked: they had the works of the ancients, which began to circulate, thanks to printing and the generosity of men of power and noble birth. It was a common belief that it was enough to read in order to become learned; and it is far easier to read than to understand” (*Prelim. Disc.*, pp. 61–63; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 54–65).

Admiration for the ancients, elevated to a cult of their works and their dead languages, created a “multitude of erudite men” showing off their knowledge, who were not greatly esteemed by “our century, which believes itself called upon to change every type of law and to make justice” (on the seventeenth-century origin of this awareness of the separation between the “philosophical century” and the “learned century” cf. *Models*, I, p. 240; II, pp. 115–116). D’Alembert, however, rejects the excessive, anti-historical criticisms aimed at renaissance scholars, who represent an unavoidable transition in the advance of the human mind: “So that we could take everything that could be useful from the works of the ancients, it was also necessary for them to dig out that which was superfluous.[ . . . ] Erudition was therefore necessary to lead us to belles-lettres” (*Prelim. Disc.*, pp. 63–64; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 56–57). Little by little, men of letters attempted to refine the vernacular languages, “freeing themselves from the kind of mania” that made them slaves of the ancients. The arts and *belles lettres* therefore flourished in Italy and France, while reason and hence philosophy developed much later. Indeed, “the reading of the ancients contributed more immediately to the advancement of belles-lettres and good taste than to the progress of the natural sciences. Literary beauties do not have to be viewed for long in order to be perceived; and as men perceive before they think, for the same reason they judge their perceptions before judging their thoughts. Moreover, as philosophers, the ancients did not come close to the perfection they achieved as writers [ . . . ]” (*Prelim. Disc.*, p. 70; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, p. 60).

The establishment of “true philosophy” was hampered by the “so-called science” of Scholasticism. The respect shown to Antiquity was such that no one cared to “ascertain whether that barbarous philosophy [the doctrine of Aristotle, commented on by the Arabs and corrupted by thousands of absurd or childish additions] was really the philosophy of this great master”. These “prejudices” were aggravated by the “abuse” made by the theologians, who feared that the blind reason of the ancients could be a threat to the Christian religion, or who “tried to elevate their individual opinions into dogmas”. Again, other theologians gave reason the task of “revealing to us the system of the physical world”. Here D’Alembert denounces the “theological despotism” and the court of the Inquisition, referring to the case of Galileo, and remarks: “It was thus that the abuse of the spiritual authority, joined

with the temporal, forced reason to silence; and they were not far from denying the human race the right to think" (*Prelim. Disc.*, pp. 71–74; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 61–63).

But let us consider the origins of "true philosophy". The multitudes of "poorly educated or badly intentioned opponents", not even one of whom is named, are contrasted with those few "great men" who "silently in the shadows prepared from afar the light which was gradually to illuminate the world by imperceptible degrees". The first is of course Francis Bacon, "the greatest, the most universal, and the most eloquent of the philosophers", who is openly acknowledged to be "our master" as regards the encyclopaedic organization of the sciences. He was open to all manifestations of the human intelligence, and in particular he "demonstrated the need for experimental physics, which no one was yet aware of. Hostile to systems, he conceived of philosophy as being only that part of our knowledge which should contribute to making us better or happier". However, the rupture and the renewal he brought about was not radical enough to defeat Scholasticism, which "could only be overthrown by the bold new opinions" with which the founders of new schools made themselves famous. Bacon was not the head of a school and his philosophical style, which emphasised above all that which the human mind still has to discover, was not made "to astonish anyone"; moreover, he still used the terms and principles of Scholasticism and "he showed too much respect for and deference towards the dominant taste of his century" (*Prelim. Disc.*, pp. 74–76; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 63–64).

The qualities Bacon lacked appear instead in Descartes, who "possessed all the qualities necessary for changing the face of philosophy: a strong imagination, a highly logical mind, knowledge drawn more from himself than from books, great courage in combating the most universally held prejudices, and an independence that allowed him not to spare them". There is a clear reference here to mathematics, natural philosophy, and metaphysics. The fundamental theory, vigorously supported by D'Alembert, is centred on the justification of Descartes' philosophical mistakes as historically inevitable and, in a sense, necessary. Indeed, with respect to geometry (which is a rigorously progressive science greatly developed by Descartes, as everyone acknowledges), "philosophy found itself in quite a different state. There everything remained to be done, and what a high price the first steps in any branch of knowledge cost!". By impartially judging the theory of vortices, which was to prove "ridiculous", we can see that it was the best that could have been conceived at that time. Developing an idea which he had already outlined at the beginning of the *Discours*, D'Alembert seems to incline towards a dialectic development of thought through clear oppositions, rather than a gradual development on the basis of a number of 'seeds': Descartes was "undoubtedly mistaken in admitting the existence of innate ideas; but if he had limited himself to accepting the only truth taught by the Aristotelians – the origin of ideas through the senses – perhaps it would have been more difficult to eradicate the errors that went along with it and disfigured it. [...] Moreover, when absurd opinions are inveterate, one is sometimes forced to replace them by other errors if one cannot do better, in order to disillusion the human race" (*Prelim. Disc.*, pp. 77–80; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 65–67).

The person who "gave philosophy a form which seems destined to last" was Newton, whose theories had long prevailed in French culture. D'Alembert appre-

ciates the moderation shown by the English scientist and asserts the originality of his theories against those who tended to credit the ancients with all the discoveries: “But even supposing that the Greeks had had an intuition in the same direction, what was only a rash and romantic system with them became a demonstrated truth in the hands of Newton. That demonstration, which is his alone, constitutes the true merit of his discovery. Without such support, the theory of attraction would only be a hypothesis like so many others”. As for the “occult qualities” Newton had been accused of admitting back into physics, they should not be understood as the Scholastics did, but taken as a simple admission of the limits of our knowledge, which ignores the “principle” of the force of gravitation (*Prelim. Disc.*, pp. 81–82; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 68–69).

The re-foundation of metaphysics that Newton “had not dared, or perhaps had not been able to carry out” was performed by Locke, who made the knowledge of the soul and its representative activity rest on an analysis of the individual self rather than on books. “He reduced metaphysics to what it really ought to be: the experimental physics of the soul – a very different kind of physics from that of bodies, not only in its object, but also in how it views that object. In one we can, and often do, discover unknown phenomena. In the other, facts as ancient as the world exist equally in all men [ . . . ]. Reasonable metaphysics can, like experimental physics, only exist in the careful assembling of all these facts, in reducing them to a corpus of information, in explaining some by others, and in distinguishing those which ought to hold the first rank and serve as the basis for others. In brief, the principles of metaphysics, which are as simple as axioms, are the same for the philosophers as for the general run of people”. Locke’s doctrines merge here with the personal convictions of D’Alembert, who must have felt he was the heir to this true new philosophy. It is not by chance that Locke comes at the end of the review of the “principal geniuses that the human mind ought to regard as its masters” (*Prelim. Disc.*, pp. 83–85; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 70–71).

In the following pages brief mention is made of other thinkers and scientists who, “without proposing views as great as those which we have just mentioned, have contributed much to the advancement of the sciences”: Galileo, Harvey, Huygens, Pascal, Malebranche, Boyle, Vesalius, Sydenham, Boerhaave . . . Among them, the “illustrious” Leibniz is given special prominence: “not as wise as Locke and Newton, he was not content to formulate doubts, but tried to dissipate them”, and he brought to metaphysics “more sagacity than enlightenment” (*Prelim. Disc.*, p. 87 and note 36; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, p. 72). The *Discours* then passes judgement on contemporary culture and includes references to Maupertuis, Fontenelle, Buffon, Condillac, Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. As far as the historical periodization is concerned, it is worth noting the reference to Montesquieu, whose ‘Éloge’ D’Alembert was later to include in volume V of the *Encyclopédie*. In an addendum included in a later edition of the *Discours préliminaire*, the *Esprit des lois* is defined as “a work that will be an immortal monument to the genius and to the virtue of its author, and to the progress of reason in our century, the central years of which will remain a memorable epoch in the history of philosophy” (*Prelim. Disc.*, p. 100 note 53; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, p. 80).



This chronological reference, which was to be echoed by La Harpe in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter, becomes a true category of periodization in the ‘Tableau de l’esprit humain au milieu du dixhuitième siècle’ placed at the beginning of the *Essai sur les éléments de philosophie*. Here the history of modern culture appears to be divided into four periods, which are defined with almost geometrical regularity by the events that occurred around the middle of each century. “It seems as though for about three hundred years nature has destined the middle of each century to be an epoch marked by a revolution in the human mind”: the fall of Constantinople, the Protestant Reformation at the time of the Council of Trent, and the beginning of the spread of the “new philosophy” created by Descartes are events which took place every hundred years. Moreover, “however briefly we consider the middle of the century in which we live, the events that shake us or at least concern us, our customs, our works, and even our conversations, it is difficult not to see that in many respects quite a considerable change has taken place in our ideas, a change whose rapidity seems to prepare us for an even greater change”. In this century, which is defined as “the century of philosophy *par excellence*”, knowledge has shown great progress, a “general effervescence of minds” is visible, and every aspect of the human world (from the secular sciences to theology, metaphysics, morals, aesthetics, law, and the economy) has undergone analysis and debate. In conclusion, this overall view seems to reveal “that reason has somehow been resting for more than a thousand years of barbarism, to then manifest its reawakening and its action with repeated and powerful efforts” (*Essai sur les éléments de philosophie*, in *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 121–123).

D’Alembert’s historiographical interest seems therefore to focus on the more recent phases of the *histoire de l’esprit humain*, during which mankind has made the greatest progress.<sup>2</sup> However, this does not imply an idea of uninterrupted and rectilinear progress, as in the case of Condorcet. On the contrary, D’Alembert points out that even in the enlightened century there are “innumerable circumstances” pushing towards “barbarism”: in particular, there is “that love of false wit and brilliance that protects ignorance, prides itself in it, and sooner or later will spread it everywhere. Ignorance will be the final fruit and ultimate degree of bad taste – yet also its remedy. For everything has regular revolutions, and the darkness will be like a sort of anarchy, which is truly baleful in itself, but sometimes useful in its consequences. However, let us not hope for such a terrible upset. Barbarism lasts for centuries; it seems that it is our natural element; reason and good taste are only passing” (*Prelim. Disc.*, pp. 102–103; cf. *Oeuvres*, I, p. 81).

D’Alembert’s interest in the vicissitudes of the human mind from the renaissance of letters onwards does not exclude a specific interest in the ancients. For this

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<sup>2</sup>As for the methodological and didactic implications of this interest in more recent history, see the *Réflexions sur l’histoire* quoted above, which suggests that history should be taught “backwards, starting with the ages that are closer to us and ending with the remotest times. The detail and, so to speak, the amount of facts would decrease as they become distant and therefore less certain and less interesting” (*Oeuvres*, II, p. 8).

reason, the article ‘Expérimental’ (later introduced at the end of the *Essai sur les éléments de philosophie* under the title ‘Physique générale’), for example, begins with a summary of the historical development of the scientific method starting with the Greeks, who are judged in very positive terms: “The ancients, to whom we believe we are greatly superior in the sciences, because it is easier and more pleasant for us to place ourselves above them rather than to read them, did not neglect the study of nature, which we usually blame them for doing. They very quickly understood that observation and experience are the only means for knowing nature. The works of Hippocrates alone would be enough to demonstrate the spirit which then animated the philosophers”. This is not merely a general application of the category of prefigurement because D’Alembert also pays attention to the differences in aims and method between ancient and modern students of nature. After dividing experimental physics into a “physics of facts” or “vulgar and palpable physics”, based on simple observation, and an “occult physics”, founded on experimentation, he observes that “the ancients did not devote themselves much to this latter kind of physics. They were satisfied with reading the great book of nature, but they read it with diligence and with more attentive and expert eyes than we think”, and this method is “the most suitable to allow physics to make the greatest progress it was capable of making in this first era of the human mind”. Moreover, “it seems that the ancients cultivated experience only in relation to the arts and not, as we do, in order to satisfy a purely philosophical curiosity. They disassembled bodies and put them back together just to use them for profit or delight, without bothering much about understanding their movement and their structure”.

In this historical *excursus* up to the contemporary age (note that mention is made of the institution of a chair of experimental physics at the university of Paris in 1753), it is worth noting the reference to experience, as proof capable of providing the more general principles with stronger foundations: in underlining the connection between physics and medicine, D’Alembert observes that this is a “truth which is confirmed by experience, because even starting only from the renaissance of letters, we have seen that each of the aforementioned sciences has undergone the same changes which have altered or distorted another science”; later on, to illustrate the principle that in the cultural field a “revolution” is almost always carried out by the generation that follows the one that had laid the basis for it, the recent events at the university of Paris are quoted as “convincing proof” (art. ‘Expérimental’, *Encycl.*, VI, pp. 298–299). These are indications of the ‘scientific’ use of the past that reveals the characteristics and the limitations of D’Alembert’s historiographical approach.

### 1.3 The Articles on the History of Philosophy in the *Encyclopédie*

**1.3.1** Although he wrote most of the articles on the history of philosophy, Diderot did not formulate any observations of a theoretical nature, since he was mainly concerned with adapting Brucker’s monumental *Historia critica philosophiae* to

the structure and rhythms of the *Encyclopédie*. However, there is a description of the concept of the ‘history of philosophy’ in the anonymous article ‘Philosophie’, which was very probably written by the abbé Yvon. After defining the “sense” of the term ‘philosophy’ and giving a “good definition” of it, the author clearly distinguishes between this discipline and historical erudition: “The greatest philosopher is he who accounts for the greatest number of things, this is precisely the place which is assigned to him: in this way *erudition* is no longer confused with *philosophy*. A knowledge of facts is certainly useful, and is even a fundamental preliminary to their explanation; but being a philosopher does not only mean having seen and read much, nor does it mean knowing the history of philosophy, the sciences and the arts: all this often creates nothing but unbearable chaos; by contrast, being a philosopher means having sound principles and above all a good method to explain these facts and draw legitimate consequences from them” (art. ‘Philosophie’, *Encycl.*, XII, p. 514).

This distinction was already in the air, but it is worth emphasising because it represents the codification of a cultural tendency destined to be widely disseminated through the reading public of the second half of the eighteenth century. This tendency privileged philosophy and science over history, and gave the history of philosophy an instrumental and auxiliary function, as we have seen in D’Alembert. But what did the encyclopaedists mean exactly by ‘philosophy’, and who was a ‘true philosopher’? We have already mentioned the position of the epistemologist D’Alembert, while Diderot’s notion of philosophy will emerge later from an analysis of the articles on the history of philosophy, in particular ‘Éclectisme’. As for the abbé Yvon, in the article quoted here he supports Christian Wolff’s definition (philosophy is “the science of the possible as possible”) and repeats his subdivision of the philosophical sciences, finally declaring that “what characterises a philosopher and distinguishes him from the common people is that he admits nothing without proof, does not consent to fallacious notions, and defines the limits of what is certain, probable, and doubtful with precision” (*Encycl.*, XII, p. 514).

But this systematic, scholastic conception of philosophy coexists in the vast repository of the *Encyclopédie* with the much more radical concept expressed in the article ‘Philosophe’, contiguous with and complementary to the article ‘Philosophie’. Taken from an anonymous work entitled ‘Le philosophe’ (attributed to Dumarsais, written around 1730, and first published in the volume *Nouvelles libertés de penser*, Amsterdam, 1743), this article reflects the values of the *esprits forts*, albeit in a more veiled way. It creates a portrait of the *philosophe* which the encyclopaedists fully identified with: an enemy of superstition and fanaticism, he is guided in his actions by reason, just as the Christian is governed by grace; aware of the “limits of the human mind”, free from the constraints of the speculative systems, and open to “commerce with others”, he honours “civil society” (which “is for him a deity on earth”) and more than anything, he looks after his own business, and certainly does not reject the “comforts in life” (*Encycl.*, XII, p. 510).

In the article ‘Philosophie’ there are no historical references, but only a mention of the stoic conception of the wise man. It should be noted, however, that the original text clearly shows an interest in knowledge of the past, which is omitted in the version published in the *Encyclopédie*. This interest is motivated by an eclectic idea,

illustrated by the ancient *topos* of bees: “to increase the quantity of our knowledge and ideas, the philosophers study the men of the past and the present. Roam, they tell us, through the past and the present world, then come back to your hive and produce honey”. This attitude contrasts with that of “certain metaphysicians”, who are convinced “that man only draws truth from his heart” and who “say, avoid sensible impressions! Leave the knowledge of the facts to the historians, leave the knowledge of languages to grammarians!”. The author distances himself both from the Cartesians, who deny the value of studying the past, and from the scholars, who remain aloof from social life: “A sect that is famous nowadays reproaches the learned for neglecting to study their hearts and for overloading their memory with facts and research into Antiquity; and we reproach both the former and the latter for neglecting the art of making themselves pleasant and for refusing to take part in society” (H. Dieckmann, *Le philosophe. Texts and Interpretations*, St Louis, 1948, pp. 34, 36, and 44; see also *Philosophes sans Dieu. Textes athées clandestins du XVIIIe siècle*, G. Mori and A. Mothu eds, Paris, 2010, pp. 29 and 32).

**1.3.2** In the theoretical statements and the historical treatment of the *Discours préliminaire*, the place of the history of philosophy is not clearly defined, constrained as it is between Bacon’s literary history and the more recent *histoire de l’esprit humain*. In those articles of the *Encyclopédie* devoted to the ancient and modern philosophies, on the other hand, its position is clear. The classification that usually appears after the titles of the articles normally uses the phrase, ‘History of philosophy’, with a few variations that show an attempt at some form of chronological subdivision. The articles ‘Éclectisme’ and ‘Hobbisme’, for example, appear in the ‘History of ancient and modern philosophy’, whereas ‘Cyrénaïque’ and ‘Locke’ are placed in the ‘Ancient history of philosophy and philosophers’ and the ‘History of modern philosophy’, respectively. By contrast, the articles ‘Cynique’ and ‘Leibnizianisme’, although very close to the previous articles both in alphabetical and chronological order, are generically classed as the ‘History of philosophy’. These variants were clearly not unified during the final revision of the separate volumes.

To create the completest possible picture of the treatment of the history of philosophy in the *Encyclopédie*, however, the articles concerning the history of thought must also be added to those classed as ‘History of philosophy’, even though they fall within more or less adjacent fields. This is the case of ‘Acousmatiques’, ‘Bacchionites’, and ‘Brachmanes’ (‘Ancient history’), ‘Aschariouns’ (‘Modern history’), ‘Cabalistes’ (‘History’), ‘Chair’ (‘Ancient and modern history’; this mainly refers to the diet of the Pythagoreans), ‘Chaos’ (‘Philosophy and mythology’), ‘Égoïstes’ (‘Philosophy’; it is concerned with ‘idealists’ like Berkeley), ‘Hylopathianisme’ (which is included, perhaps mistakenly, in the ‘History of philology’), ‘Jésus-Christ’ (‘History and philosophy’), ‘Newtonianisme’ (‘Physics’), ‘Nombres’ (‘Pythagorean philosophy’), and ‘Zenda Vesta’ (‘Philosophy and Antiquity’). Here it is worth quoting D’Alembert’s note in the preface to volume III: “[compared with Chambers’ encyclopaedia] several articles concerning history and mythology have been preserved and completed because they have been considered necessary

for knowledge of the different sects of philosophers, the different religions, and some ancient and modern customs” (D’Alembert, *Oeuvres*, IV, p. 388). Moreover, if we take into account the entries classed as ‘Grammar’, that is to say philosophical nomenclature, which are often very short but interesting, such as ‘Forme substantielle’, ‘Harmonie préétablie’, ‘Production’, ‘Spinosiste’ . . . , then the overall number of articles concerning the history of philosophy greatly exceeds the 70 which appear in the lists of the *Fonds Vandeul*. As for the separate edition of the articles on the history of philosophy (the *Histoire générale des dogmes et opinions philosophiques*, Londres, 1769, which is attributed in the catalogue of the Bibl. Nationale of Paris to the writer Jean-Louis Castilhon in addition to Diderot), it only quotes 54 articles from the *Encyclopédie*. The most significant omissions include the entries ‘Jésus-Christ’ and ‘Scholastiques’ (ancient and medieval Christian thought) and ‘Antédiluvienne, philosophie’. This *Histoire générale* has no preface, it is made up of three octavo volumes (I: from ‘Académiciens’ to ‘Egyptiens’, pp. 430; II: from ‘Eléatique’ to ‘Péripatéticienne, philosophie’, pp. 444; and III: from ‘Perses’ to ‘Zenda Vesta’, pp. 414), and contains a final index of articles (III, pp. 415–416).

**1.3.3** Because of the alphabetical order structuring the *Encyclopédie*, the periodisation of the history of philosophy loses its function as a framework, and the diachronic perspective is overshadowed by a synchronic and thematic approach, which also makes use of cross references between similar entries. The alphabetical order is preserved in the *Histoire générale des dogmes et opinions philosophiques*, where it would have been easy to arrange the articles in chronological order. However, the treatment of the history of philosophy refers to a general framework of periodisation, which is more simple than the three- and four-fold divisions adopted by Brucker and Deslandes respectively (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 191–193 and 514–519). Indeed, philosophy is subdivided into “ancient” and “modern”, and the latter also includes medieval thought. This distinction appears not only in the classification of the articles, but also in a statement by Diderot, where he speaks of the “ancient and modern history of philosophy” (Proust, p. 156), and it was to be taken up in Naigeon’s *Encyclopédie méthodique* (see below, Sect. 1.4.2.). Additional subdivisions can be found in the article ‘Grecs, philosophie des’ (which is divided into three parts corresponding to the “three main epochs” of the history of the Greeks: “fabulous philosophy”, the “political philosophy” of the early legislators and sages, and “sectarian philosophy”, born with the schools and divided into Ionic and Italic), and in the article ‘Scholastiques’, in which the usual three-fold division is mentioned (OC, VII, pp. 324–347; VIII, pp. 287–288).

Beside this chronological division, there is a ‘philosophical’ sense to the periodization of eclecticism. Although this periodization comes from Brucker, it accords with Diderot’s personal convictions and allows us to establish an interesting comparison with the historical *excursus* of the *Discours préliminaire*. Eclectic philosophy, which had been “practised by the first talented men long before it received a name”, established itself as a school and took on a name between the second and the third centuries AD; this “ancient eclecticism” came to an end with Hypatia’s tragic death at the beginning of the fifth century. Eclectic philosophy

remained “buried in oblivion until the end of the sixteenth century” and was revived when “after long lethargy, almost exhausted, nature exerted itself and finally generated men who were faithful to the most beautiful human prerogative, freedom of thought”: Giordano Bruno, Cardano, Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Thomasius, and Malebranche . . . At the time of the revival of letters, attention focused on imitating the ancients and “even reading the philosophers gave rise to a particular kind of emulation; arguments were formulated, systems were constructed and, in discussing them, their stronger and weaker sides were soon discovered. From that moment onwards, the impossibility of either totally accepting or refusing some of them was perceived”. After a first syncretistic phase, which aimed at “mending the system they had become attached to”, great progress was made in the direction of eclecticism, illustrated by a metaphor not found in Brucker: “The need to abandon a building that was falling apart and find a shelter in another one which was soon to follow the same destiny, and then move away from this into a third which time was soon to decay again, finally induced other builders [ . . . ] to move to the countryside and use the solid material they managed to rescue from the ruins to build a lasting, eternal town, capable of withstanding the assaults that had already destroyed the other towns. These new builders were called the eclectics” (art. ‘Éclectisme’, OC, VII, pp. 39 and 78–80).

**1.3.4** There is a general interpretation of the historical development of thought – ancient thought above all – in the first part of the article ‘Philosophie’, where the author attempts to “give an account of the origin and different meanings” of the term philosophy from a historical perspective. This approach may have been suggested by both the ‘Préface’ to Deslandes’ *Histoire critique* and by Brucker’s ‘Dissertatio praeliminaris’ (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 183–184 and 485–486). Indeed, a little further on, both these authors are recommended to those who wish to “study the subject in depth” (*Encycl.*, XII, p. 511: this double bibliographical reference supports the attribution of the article ‘Philosophie’ to the abbé Yvon, who had used both Brucker and Deslandes’ works in the article ‘Aristotélisme’, while Diderot only quotes the former). The treatment is centred on the relationship between philosophy and the other fields of study which make up the *histoire de l’esprit humain*. At the time of the “childhood of the human mind”, when philosophers were called sages, wisdom and erudition were confused with one another, and a sage was he who possessed “the encyclopaedia of all that which was known in the current century”. Since the study and the cult of the divinity were considered to be “wisdom *par excellence*”, the theologians and priests were given the name of sages. But this link between wisdom and theology is judged negatively: “Ridiculous superstitions, puerile and at times abominable mysteries, visions and falsehoods aimed at strengthening their authority and deceiving the blind populace: this was all the wisdom of the priests in those times”. Indeed, quite soon this link was rejected by the ancient philosophers, who had initially tried to be initiated into the priestly mysteries.

The overall verdict on the Greek philosophers is clear: they tried to “deduce sound wisdom from the ideas and principles provided by nature and reason, to create a system endowed with certitude and founded on indestructible bases; in

this way they managed to shake off the yoke of vulgar superstitions, but the rest of their undertaking did not meet with the same success. After having destroyed, they did not know how to build, and this made them similar in some way to those conquerors who leave nothing but devastation behind them. Hence the bulk of strange and contradictory opinions, which leaves us to wonder whether there still exists some ridiculous idea that has not yet occurred to the mind of some philosopher" (*Encycl.*, XII, p. 511). This judgement is supported by a well-known passage by Fontenelle (cf. *Models*, II, p. 11, note), in which the mistakes made by the ancients are considered to be a precondition necessary for modern progress. However, the author is careful to point out that "the oddities of the human mind did not prevent philosophy from growing considerably": the ancients sowed "the seeds of most modern discoveries"; they reached excellent results in the fields in which there was no need to use observation and instruments, such as morals, whereas the moderns are "naturally more capable" in physics, medicine, and mathematics. This review of commonplaces also touches on the birth of the sects, the confusion between wisdom and eloquence (which is why the sage became a sophist), and the practice of esotericism. With the advent of Christianity, the name philosophy, which had always been used to designate several different disciplines, entered the Church: the Christian religion was called "sacred philosophy", while doctors and ascetics were called philosophers (*Encycl.*, XII, p. 512). Further on, in dealing with the definition of philosophy, the text dwells on the "two main obstacles [that] have long slowed down the progress of philosophy, authority and the spirit of system", with references to Malebranche and Fontenelle as well as to Pluche's *Histoire du ciel* (cf. *Models*, II, p. 97). The author observes that "after the appearance of a Descartes, a Newton, a Leibniz, and a Wolff, after mathematics formed an alliance with philosophy, the way to reason was greatly perfected" (*Encycl.*, XII, p. 513).

Still linked to the seventeenth-century *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, this historical sketch looks considerably out of date compared with the *Discours préliminaire*. However, it is in an article of a general nature, and must have represented a first point of contact with the history of philosophy for the readers of the *Encyclopédie*. As for the more specific theories, we should bear in mind that the articles of the *Encyclopédie* on this history of philosophy are second-hand historiographical works as they are all taken from other histories of philosophy, and most of all from Brucker. We should not focus our attention, therefore, on the contents, which are obviously taken from the sources, but rather on the way in which these contents were selected and presented and on the observations they inspired. It is worth noting, for example, that after the lengthy account that the abbé Pestré had taken from Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs*, the article 'Cabale' contains a final note by D'Alembert in which he justifies the treatment of these alluring cabalistic fancies: "Here you have a load of chimeras. But the history of philosophy, that is to say, of the eccentricities of a great number of savants, falls within the ambit of our work; and we think that the philosophers themselves may consider the spectacle of the fancies elaborated by their fellows to be somewhat curious and interesting. We can certainly state that there is no form of foolishness which has not occurred to the human mind, even to the minds of the sages [. . .]. So after reading this article

and many others”, concludes D’Alembert mentioning some examples of visionary theories, “we may recite these verses from the *Plaideurs*: ‘How many fools! I have never been to such a feast’” (*Encycl.*, II, p. 486).

The comedy quoted here is by Racine, and it was inspired by Aristophanes’ *Wasps*. But let us also mention the final part of the article ‘Cartésianisme’, again by D’Alembert, in which the life of Descartes provides a lesson for the modern *philosophes*: “The persecutions this philosopher had to suffer for having declared war on prejudice and ignorance should comfort those who have the same courage and meet with the same misadventures” (*Encycl.*, II, pp. 725–726). Equally significant is the comment with which Diderot concludes “the presentation of the eccentricities of philosophy and the religion of the Brahmins”: as for the danger to society represented by those who are “concerned with creating centres of darkness” which cause people to sink “into profound night”, he observes that such a calamity appears remote today because “Philosophy progresses by giant steps, accompanied and followed by light” (art. ‘Bramines’, OC, VI, p. 228).

At times the material on the history of philosophy is adapted by adding topical references of a journalistic or frivolous nature intended to render an erudite or remote subject more attractive to the average reader. “It is a bit like what we, the French, do when we consider everything different from our customs as vulgar”, observes the abbé Yvon with regard to the dislike the ancient Greeks and Romans felt for the other nations: indeed, they “wanted to dominate even more through the mind than through the power of arms, just as we ourselves attempt to do by means of our fashions” (art. ‘Barbares’, *Encycl.*, II, p. 68). As for Diderot, when he explains the insubstantiality of the philosophy of the Phoenicians by the fact that “the spirit of commerce is opposed to the spirit of philosophy” he does not fail to remind the French of their proverbial gallantry: a typical Dutch merchant, in his travels overseas, is only concerned to ask for information about the merchandise, whereas a French merchant usually asks the natives a further question: “Are your women attractive?” (art. ‘Phéniciens’, OC; VIII, p. 110).

The presence of Diderot the *homme de lettres-philosophe* and contributor to the *Correspondance littéraire* can be discerned, for example, in the vivid general picture of the Greeks, in particular the Athenians: besides the young and the common people who throng to the gymnasia, theatres, and temples every morning; beside the men who govern (“who are rapidly sacrificed one after another by a restless populace spurred on by jealousy”), and the “multitude, half serious and half humorous” of men of letters, there stands out “a small number” “of sad and quarrelsome men [who] distrust the gods, criticise the customs of the nation, point out the stupidities of the great men, and tear each other to pieces. They call this ‘love of virtue and search for truth’. These men are the philosophers, who are now and then persecuted and put to flight by the priests and the magistrates”, obviously mirroring the contemporary *philosophes* (art. ‘Grecs’, OC, VII, p. 344). Diderot also scatters short autobiographical references throughout his historical reconstruction. “Ah! Socrates! How little I resemble you, but at least you make me cry with admiration and joy”, he exclaims when commenting on the dialogue between Socrates and his son Lamprocles, taken from Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, via Brucker (art. ‘Socratique’,



OC, VIII, p. 317; cf. Trousson, *Socrate devant Voltaire, Diderot et Rousseau*, p. 65). Concluding this article, Diderot dwells on the figure of Timon the Misanthrope, who “fled from the society of his fellow men because they were evil”, but “he was mistaken, because he himself was not good”. This disciple of Socrates, who “with a heart full of pride, envy, and bitterness secludes himself in a forest”, clearly masks Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whom Diderot targets a little further on in the article ‘Théosophes’, in the course of a long digression on the art of physiognomy (OC, VIII, pp. 327–328 and 367).

The articles by Diderot, however, reveal a far deeper speculative and ideological interest. Indeed, Diderot’s materialistic and anti-Christian theories spread through his adaptation of Brucker’s work like a virus. The doctrinal positions that emerge were certainly not shared by the German historiographer, who, let us not forget, was a Lutheran minister firmly convinced of the need for and the value of Revelation (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 493–494). Wolffian rationalism, however, which Brucker followed, constituted a suitable terrain for the materialistic and irreligious seed; in some cases, we even have the impression that the mere transition from Brucker’s academic Latin to Diderot’s brilliant French was enough to endow the text with a much more radical *esprit* (cf. Proust, p. 266).

A systematic analysis of the way in which Brucker was translated and adapted as a source is not possible here, but we can limit ourselves to some examples. Among the articles concerning the history of philosophy written by Diderot, one of the most significant is undoubtedly ‘Éclectisme’ because it provides a sort of self-portrait based on Brucker’s text. Like a good historian, Brucker proceeds gradually and distinguishes between the ancient eclecticism of the Neoplatonists (which is closer to the spirit of the traditional sects) and true, mature eclecticism which established itself with the rebirth of letters (Brucker, II, pp. 189–462, ‘De secta eclectica’; IV/2, pp. 3–543, ‘De studio philosophiae eclecticae post renatas literas’). Yet this difference in place and judgement appears vague in the article ‘Éclectisme’, where, more as a philosopher than a historiographer, Diderot proposes the definition of ‘eclectic’ that Brucker puts forward only later on (in the introduction to the “restorers” of eclectic philosophy, right at the beginning, as a sort of manifesto): “The eclectic is a philosopher who, by trampling on prejudice, tradition, Antiquity, universal consensus, authority, in a word all that which subjugates the heart of the common people, dares to think with his own mind, goes back to the clearest general principles, examines them, discusses them, refusing to admit anything without the proof of experience and reason” (OC, VII, p. 36; cf. Brucker, IV/2, p. 4).

The following presentation, although it is inspired by Brucker’s work, rewrites it freely and takes on a tone typical of Diderot. Let us take a representative passage, where Brucker, for example, observes that eclecticism is not new in the history of philosophy. Note how Diderot does not merely use a more lively form of language than Brucker, but also introduces a significant political analogy into the middle of this historical reference, quoted below in italics:

Nec si proprie appellationem accipiamus, eclectica philosophia nova est, sed antiquissima, maximisque viris sectarumque conditoribus omnibus usitatissima. Pythagoram enim ex Aegyptiorum, et si quosdam audias, orientalium placitis, Phaenicumque philosophia, Grae-

ciaeque veteris theologia systema suum conflasse; Platonem ex Italica, Socratica et Heraclitica philosophiae novum eius genus condidisse, Zenonem Pythagoreorum, Heracliteorum, Platoniorum, Dialecticorum, Cynicorum placita novo, quod in porticu condidit systemati intulisse (Brucker, II, p. 189).

Il s'ensuit de ce qui précède, que l'éclectisme pris à la rigueur n'a point été une philosophie nouvelle, puisqu'il n'y a point de chef de secte qui n'ait été plus ou moins éclectique; *et conséquemment que les éclectiques sont parmi les philosophes ce que sont les souverains sur la surface de la terre, les seuls qui soient restés dans l'état de nature où tout était à tous.*<sup>3</sup> Pour former son système, Pythagore mit à contribution les théologiens de l'Égypte, les gymnosophistes de l'Inde, les artistes de la Phénicie, et les philosophes de la Grèce. Platon s'enrichit des dépouilles de Socrate, d'Héraclite, et d'Anaxagore; Zénon pillait le pythagorisme, le platonisme, l'héraclitisme, le cynisme ('Éclectisme', OC, VII, p. 37).

At this point, while Brucker refers to the treatment of Greek philosophy in tome I of his *Historia critica*, Diderot hints at the study tours that the ancient philosophers used to make. This common *topos* gives him the opportunity to suggest a sense of relativity in religious as well as philosophical opinions, thanks to a juxtaposition which is by no means innocent: "But since it is almost impossible for a man who travels through many countries and comes upon many religions, not to waver (*chanceler*) in his religious feelings, so it is equally difficult for a wise man who attends many schools of philosophy, to tie himself exclusively to one school and not to drift towards eclecticism or scepticism" (OC, VII, pp. 37–38). It is thanks asides such as this, artfully combined with omissions, that Diderot gives his historical reconstruction of eclecticism a different character, superimposing his own mentality and ideas onto those of Brucker. In the article 'Éclectisme' we therefore find echoes of Shaftesbury's theories on the theology of the Fathers and "enthusiasm", connections with the *Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature*, critical asides aimed at the adversaries of the *Encyclopédie*, as well as a lively homage to the memory of Montesquieu, who is held up as a symbol of the true philosopher. Brucker's polemic against the intolerance of the Roman Church is extended to all religions, and the role of the Protestant Reformation in the rebirth of eclecticism becomes negligible compared with the rise of the experimental method, upon which true philosophy is made depend (cf. Casini, *Diderot et le portrait du philosophe éclectique*, pp. 39–44).

Another particularly emblematic article is 'Épicuréisme', in which Diderot spreads the principles of materialism using the words of the Greek philosopher. Indeed, at the beginning of the article, after noting, like Brucker, that Epicurus was the most criticised and slandered of all the philosophers, he declares that "in order to come to an impartial judgement concerning Epicurus' doctrine we shall present the philosopher surrounded by his disciples, while he dictates his lessons to them in the shade of the trees he himself planted. In the remaining part of this article we shall therefore let him speak and we trust to the equity of the reader to take this

<sup>3</sup>On the "state of nature" in Diderot, see Proust, pp. 146–148; see also S. Goyard-Fabre, 'Les idées politiques de Diderot au temps de l'*Encyclopédie*', *Rev. int. Philos.*, XXXVIII (1984), nos 148–149, pp. 91–119; L.G. Crocker, 'Diderot as a Political Philosopher', *ibid.*, pp. 120–139.

into consideration. We shall only take the liberty of interspersing his principles with some more immediate consequences which can be deduced from them" (OC, VII, p. 268; see also p. 287 note, containing the meticulous criticisms aimed at this article by Chaumeix and the authors of *La Religion vengée*).

In order to make this literary device more effective Diderot reverses the traditional order which had also been adopted by Brucker, and places the doctrines before the biographical presentation. But since he is writing in the first person, Epicurus' historical philosophy becomes philosophy *tout court*, that is to say, Diderot's philosophy, or at least a philosophy which readers' should be aware of because of its particular proximity to the truth of things. The same aim is behind the observations that Diderot inserts into his paraphrase of Brucker, giving the presentation a more rigorous and up-to-date appearance: "Why", asks the encyclopaedist in dealing with Epicurus' philosophy in general, "do the common people remain immersed in error? Why do they take words for things? Get yourselves some principles; let them be few in number but rich in consequences". Later on, when explaining Epicurus' "physiology" and the doctrine of the random nature of the world, he warns: "Let us take care not to attribute the transactions of nature to ourselves; things are produced thanks to no other cause than the universal concatenation of material beings which acted both for our good and to our detriment" (OC, VII, pp. 269 and 274). In the section on Epicurus' morals, it is worth noting the praise of *volupté* ("Therefore, oh voluptuousness! For you alone we do what we do; we never avoid you, but only too often do we avoid the suffering that accompanies you. You warm our cold reason": OC, VII, p. 280). This praise is inspired by Epicurus' doctrine as it is presented by Brucker, but it is more important than a simple historical reconstruction and is linked to one of the most typical issues addressed by Diderot; for this reason the passage has been compared with the article 'Jouissance', which is considered to be "a true erotic dithyramb" (Proust, pp. 307–308 note; cf. OC, VII, pp. 575–577).

Because of the inverse structure of the article 'Épicurisme', the biography of the Greek philosopher becomes a sort of appendix to the speculative section; but this does not deprive the article of its effectiveness as pro-Epicurean propaganda. Indeed, the biography of Epicurus is immediately followed by a short history of his ancient and modern followers, which goes beyond the chronological limits of Brucker's account. A description of the "different schools of moral Epicureanism" which spread in France during the second half of the seventeenth century is thus given, starting with the famous *salon* of Ninon de Lenclos (1620–1705), and some of the most famous names in the culture and high society of that period are rapidly listed one after another: from the countess de La Suze, known for her beauty and her poetry, to Saint-Evremond (the author of a letter *Sur la doctrine d'Épicure, à la moderne Leontium*, that is, to Ninon, considered to be a modern disciple of Epicurus), the duc de Nevers, the nephew of cardinal Mazarin, Fontenelle, and Voltaire. This survey crowns the long history of Epicureanism (which, concludes Diderot, "never enjoyed such glory as it has done in France, especially during the last century") and becomes a historical confirmation of its worth. Epicureanism "has had and will have, in all ages, a large number of followers", since it has been able to "reconcile its own morals with that which it judged to be man's real happiness, and

its own precepts with natural desires and needs” (OC, VII, pp. 281 and 285–287). The criticism of religious traditions and of the Christian religion itself becomes clear through the interplay of allusions and analogies, at which Diderot is particularly clever. These are more than the usual anticlerical remarks – such as the denunciation of “abuses” by the Egyptian priests (OC, VII, p. 119), a clear hint at the Catholic clergy – because Diderot is aiming here at damaging the very dogmatic foundations of the Christian religion. Hence, for example, when he explains the theological and moral principles of the Asharite Muslims (which correspond to those of the Christians), he does not fail to express his perplexity and point out that the questions of providence and predestination, God’s assistance and human freedom, give rise to “disputes and heresies wherever they are discussed” (art. ‘Aschariouns’, OC, V, pp. 512–513).

But it is above all in the passages censored by the publisher Le Breton that Diderot shows he is the heir of libertine criticism of religion: “[...] and where are those prodigies which all the peoples of the earth have been and still are so infatuated with, which, once enlightened by the torches of history, do not reduce themselves to lies or to totally natural events?”, he wonders, on the subject of an allegedly miraculous resurrection carried out by Empedocles (art. ‘Phythagorisme’, OC, VIII, p. 182 note). In the article ‘Sarrasins’, particularly full of personal digressions, Diderot comments as follows on the correlation between the Muslims’ “contempt” for culture and the “greater duration” “granted [to their] religious lies”: “For it is generally observed that religion declines as philosophy grows. We may hence conclude what we like either against the usefulness of philosophy or against the truth of religion; but I can already state that the more thinkers there are in Constantinople the fewer pilgrimages will be undertaken to Mecca” (OC, VIII, p. 230 note). The analogy between Constantinople-Mecca and Paris-Rome is clear, especially since Diderot goes on to mention the decrease in Easter communions taking place “in a capital” (Paris) as a sign of the “advance made by unbelief” and the “decline of national superstition”. (On the “foolishness” of those who claim to “raise the authority of tradition against that of reason, as though the authenticity of the one should not be submitted to examination by the other”, see the art. ‘Pyrrhonienne’, OC, VIII, p. 152 note). This opposition between philosophy and religious faith, absent from Brucker, places Diderot on the path “of the Spinozism – or rather pseudo-Spinozism – that so many clandestine manuscripts had contributed to disseminate during the first half of the century”. In this way, Diderot’s originality consists, at most, of having given “the incomparable support of Brucker’s erudition to that which in clandestine manuscripts was very often nothing other than a bold paradox” (Proust, p. 276; on Diderot’s neo-Spinozism cf. Vernière, pp. 555–611).

**1.3.5** The analysis of the previous paragraph demonstrates some of the characteristics of the method followed by the encyclopaedists, notably Diderot, in writing the entries on the history of philosophy. The additions and digressions lend a definite ‘philosophical’ character to the work of the compiler, but no less effective is the use of omissions, which aim not only to make the text lighter and more readable but also to ‘punish’ the spiritualistic doctrines in favour of the materialistic ones,

which receive more attention (cf. Proust, p. 265 and note 62, which provides good examples). More in general, the preeminence of the philosophical over the scholarly and informative aspect is reflected in the reduction of the biographical sections to the advantage of the doctrinal presentation, on the basis of a deliberate methodological choice. Indeed, in the 'Préface' to vol. III, D'Alembert points out that, as for the philosophers, the authors have limited themselves to mentioning "some circumstances of their lives, with few words and occasionally; we have written the history of their thoughts rather than that of their persons" (D'Alembert, *Oeuvres*, IV, p. 388; as for Brucker's distinction between the *historia personarum* – established through the study of the *circumstantiae auctorum* – and the *historia doctrinarum philosophicarum*, see *Models*, II, pp. 487–488).

A comparison with the entries on the history of philosophy in Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* is particularly interesting here. Bayle's work shows a passion for speculative criticism and a strong interest in historical and bibliographical information, within a general framework linked to the biographical tradition. In the *Encyclopédie*, on the other hand, the title of the articles is in most cases not biographical but conceptual, indicating a shift of emphasis from the figure of the philosopher to the doctrinal whole he elaborated. What prevails, therefore, are the -isms ('Aristotélisme', 'Éclectisme', 'Épicurisme', 'Hobbisme', 'Leibnizianisme'), which replace the traditional 'sect', with the exception of the articles 'Jordanus Brunus', 'Locke', and 'Thomasius (philosophie de)'. Diderot does not hide his lack of tolerance for Bayle's critical erudition (in the *Dictionnaire*, for example, the article 'Achilles' is described as *bavardage*) and he leaves out bibliographical references, identifying the sources only to "discover better arguments, and not because of historical scruple" (Réat, p. 388; Proust, p. 265). Bayle's frantic "search for mistakes" and Brucker's historical accuracy are paralleled in Diderot by a long series of mistakes in the reading or transcribing of Brucker's text, which are accurately pointed out in Proust's edition: the article 'Perses (philosophie des)', for example, is in some places incomprehensible; the dates of birth and death of Jacob Thomasius are wrong by a century; and the Mongolian emperor Kubla Khan (whom Brucker calls "Kublai Kanni") is split into two distinct people, "Kublat" and "Kanm" (OC, VIII, pp. 104, 247, 393, 425). These may be oversights resulting from haste, but they also indicate a fundamental lack of philological rigour, which was no longer in fashion in the culture of the *lumières*, because "contemporaries were not looking for historical precision in the *Encyclopédie* but for a certain spirit", which was lacking both in Brucker's work and in its adaptation into French by Formey (Proust, p. 266).

As for the sources, the combined use of Deslandes and Brucker's two 'critical histories' (acknowledged by D'Alembert himself in the 'Préface' to vol. III, in response to the accusations of plagiarism: cf. *Models*, II, pp. 206–207) in the articles written by Diderot was soon replaced by an almost exclusive reliance on Brucker. According to the list of sources compiled by Proust (pp. 550–557), the only case in which Diderot directly quotes an ancient author is in the conclusion to the article 'Grecs', where he cites a passage from Plutarch's *Oeuvres morales et mêlées* in the translation by Amyot (OC, VII, pp. 347–348). Among the

modern philosophers, only Locke is presented by direct recourse to his works rather than via Brucker's account (the source used for the biography is the *Éloge historique de feu M. Locke* by Jean Le Clerc, which appears at the beginning of the *Oeuvres diverses de M. Jean Locke*, Rotterdam, 1710; Amsterdam, 1732). Very seldom does Diderot draw on writers other than Brucker: in most cases, these are scholars of Oriental thought (Herbelot, Le Comte, Basnage, Anquetil-Duperron) or writers renowned in the French cultural world, such as Fontenelle (in particular his *Histoire des oracles*, *Éloge de Leibniz*, and *Éloge de Malebranche*) and P.D. Huet, whose *Traité philosophique de la faiblesse de l'esprit humain* (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 139–148) inspired the article 'Pyrronienne ou Sceptique', at least in part. The article 'Egyptiens' echoes a number of ideas present in the *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* by Shaftesbury, and the article 'Antédiluvienne, philosophie' also uses Shaftesbury's *Inquiry Concerning Virtue, or Merit*, translated by Diderot himself. As to the vast repertoire of information provided by Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, it is only used to a limited extent (art. 'Brachmanes', 'Bramines', 'Machiavélisme'). Indeed, Brucker's *Historia critica* made all of Bayle's research available, "merged into a global synthesis"; however, "wishing to proceed rapidly, it is greatly more convenient to use a history of philosophy rather than such a complex and sometimes misleading reference work like the *Dictionnaire*" (Rétat, p. 391).

## 1.4 The Reception of the *Encyclopédie* and the *Philosophie ancienne et moderne* by Jacques-André Naigeon

**1.4.1** During the decades that followed its publication, the *Encyclopédie* enjoyed great success in Europe. This was especially true in the France of Louis XVI, where readers' taste inclined towards reviews and dictionaries, which were subdivided into articles, and therefore allowed the rapid acquisition of information and were easier and lighter to read. The years of the Revolution marked the climax but also the end of this success because the criticisms aimed at the ideology of the *philosophes*, accused of having brought about the excesses of the Terror, also involved the most typical product of the age of the *lumières*. What is more, the *Encyclopédie* was now repugnant to the new romantic sensibility: Goethe, for example, presented it as a "monstrous work", like the huge, noisy machine used in the textile industry, which caused disgust by the mere reading (*The Auto-Biography of Goethe. Truth and Poetry: From My Own Life*, transl. J. Oxenford, London, 1848, pp. 421–422).

Since the publication of its very first volumes, Diderot and D'Alembert's work had been the object of mordant criticism by the opponents of the *philosophes*, who immediately grasped the anti-religious potential hidden in the pages of those thick *folio* volumes. Directed mainly against the theological and ideological implications, these criticisms also concerned the history of philosophy. The Jesuit Berthier in the *Mémoires de Trévoux*, Fréron in the *Année littéraire*, the Jansenist Chaumeix in his confutation of the *Encyclopédie*, the Franciscan Hayer, the lawyer Soret

in *La religion vengée*, and the abbé Maleville in the *Histoire de l'éclectisme*, all accused the encyclopaedists of having copied Brucker without quoting their source, of having distorted Deslandes' text, of having used Epicurus as a "figurehead" and of being even "more Epicurean than Epicurus himself" (Chaumeix, *Préjugés*, II, pp. 213 and 221–223), and of having spread extreme sensism, Pyrrhonism, and atheism. But it would be vain to search for any specific interest in the history of philosophy in this criticism: in the eyes of the encyclopaedists and their enemies, it only represents "a means and not an end, a weapon used in the battle of unbelief against religion" (Proust, p. 257).

A more independent assessment of the history of philosophy in the *Encyclopédie* was to appear only towards the end of the century. After his initial praise for the great encyclopaedic endeavour, La Harpe becomes more critical. In the first place he points to the "arbitrary" nature of Bacon's classification of the human faculties and the sciences (a similar criticism was also to be formulated by Dugald Stewart: see below, Sect. 7.4.3.). Moreover, he stresses Diderot's excessive prolixity and, in the name of "sound erudition" and a "true criticism of history", considers that too much space has been devoted to historical considerations, alluding to two entries on the history of philosophy: "How little space ancient Scholasticism should have occupied! How much ancient Greek philosophy should have been abbreviated! What moderation and simplicity should have been used to treat theology, the history of heresies, and councils!". A supporter of "order", "precision", and "clarity in the presentation and results", La Harpe contrasts Condillac's psychological and epistemological analysis with the work of compilation carried out by the encyclopaedists, who – as we have seen – were themselves definitely alien to scholarly excesses. "While truths and errors confusedly piled up in the huge warehouse of the *Encyclopédie*, a philosopher of far greater worth than most contributors to this dictionary was looking for the true sources of our knowledge and pursued them along their different channels, which he took care to purge and clear of the mud and debris which had built up in them over the centuries: this man was the abbé Condillac" (La Harpe, *Lycée*, XV, pp. 92, 94–95 and 135–136).

A different and more strictly historiographical tone characterizes the judgement expressed in the same period by Degérando, who mentions Diderot's contributions to the history of philosophy on two occasions. In the introductory survey of the historians of philosophy who preceded him, he observes that "the articles concerning the lives and doctrines of the major philosophers which were included by Diderot in the *Encyclopédie* are living pictures, at times brilliant, but their accuracy is hardly rigorous; the author's vivid imagination did not allow him to develop either patience in his research or the precision and dignity needed in history; his erudition is borrowed, and if we are not mistaken, he mostly worked by following Brucker's footsteps; he is dominated by his personal opinions and his judgements are characterized by his prejudices" (Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, pp. 136–137; see also Degérando<sup>1</sup>, I, pp. 48–49).

This short but detailed analysis is paralleled by the considerations concerning the philosophical personality of Diderot, placed among the modern eclectics. After mentioning the history of eclecticism "skilfully" outlined by Diderot and

the sympathy he showed for Bacon, Locke, and above all Hobbes, Degérando observes that the encyclopaedist “would have provided an immortal service to this Eclecticism he professed, had he written his history of the ancient philosophers with as much dedication, critical ability, and precision as there are perceptive remarks scattered through it. But since he almost never goes back to the sources, he only judges these philosophers on the faith of others. You can never rely on this work, but it can often be read with much pleasure. The chain of ideas and facts is broken at every turn, opinions are summarised hastily and often imprecisely”. This insistence on Diderot’s historiographical activity is due to their common sympathy for eclecticism, and Degérando concludes this paragraph with a hope that reflects his conception of the philosophical past: “Will someone not take it upon themselves one day to draw from this huge store of thoughts inherited from so many centuries the right ideas, the useful truths contained in it, and then create a picture which would admirably justify Antiquity: we would avoid many useless repetitions, and prove in the eyes of the Sceptics that the sound minds (*les bons esprits*) of all countries and ages actually agreed much more than they suppose?” (Degérando<sup>1</sup>, I, pp. 437–439).

The philosophical and historiographical climate of the early nineteenth century was certainly not favourable to an appreciation of Diderot as a historian of philosophy, and indeed Cousin proved far less indulgent than Degérando. Cousin relates Diderot’s speculative position to sensism rather than to eclecticism, and judges its historiographical results negatively. After criticising Condillac’s work, he also refuses to define as ‘a history of philosophy’ “the passages that Diderot decided to take from Brucker’s excellent work, adding declamations and epigrams to it. This is a mockery of the works accomplished by one’s fellow-scholars, not the writing of history” (Cousin, p. 322; there is a positive assessment of the “*esquisse historique*” outlined by D’Alembert, on the other hand, in Franck, I, p. 53). In more recent times, however, Diderot’s historiographical activity has aroused more interest. It is Jacques Proust above all who has analysed it in detail both from a philological and an interpretative point of view, relating it to the more creative part of Diderot’s oeuvre. Far from reductively describing the articles on the history of philosophy as a simple compilation taken from Brucker, Proust considers them to be “an integral part of Diderot’s philosophical work”, or rather a true “text” in which we can see the typical themes that characterize Diderot’s other writings such as *Le neveu de Rameau* and the *Rêve de D’Alembert* (Proust, p. 508; OC, V, p. 8; Proust, *Raison et déraison*, pp. 425–426).

**1.4.2** The appearance of the *Encyclopédie méthodique, ou par ordre de matières* represents an isolated event in the reception of the *Encyclopédie*. Printing of the work began in 1782, thanks to the publisher Panckoucke, it was continued by Panckoucke’s son-in-law Henri Agasse from 1793, and then by Agasse’s widow, and it was finally completed in 1832. In practice, the *Encyclopédie méthodique* was a new edition of Diderot and D’Alembert’s work, in which the entries were greatly extended and grouped by subject into as many separate dictionaries so as to give the treatment a systematic rather than an alphabetical structure. Of the 166 quarto volumes that make up the *Encyclopédie méthodique*, three are devoted to the history



of philosophy, under the title *Philosophie ancienne et moderne*, and they came out in the period 1791–1794 thanks to Jacques-André Naigeon (1738–1810). A friend of the baron d'Holbach, a collaborator and keen admirer of Diderot (whose *opera omnia* he published in 1798), Naigeon had studied the classics, but he distinguished himself in particular for his anti-religious and materialistic fervour. In addition to a revision of La Grange's translation of Lucretius (1768) and a French translation of Epictetus' *Manual* as well as excerpts from Seneca's moral works (1782), he published a *Recueil philosophique, ou mélange de pièces sur la religion et la morale, par différents auteurs* (1770) and collaborated on the publication of some of the most radical writings produced during the age of the *lumières*, such as the *Examen critique des apologistes de la religion chrétienne* (1766), ascribed to Fréret, and *Le militaire philosophe, ou difficultés sur la religion, proposées au R.P. Malebranche* (1768), attributed to Thémiseul de Saint-Hyacinthe.

Published during the crucial years of the Revolution, the three volumes of *Philosophie ancienne et moderne* show signs of their historical context on the title pages themselves: volume I, “par M.[onsieur] Naigeon”, was printed by the publisher Panckoucke “avec privilège du Roi”; mention of the royal privilege disappears in the second volume, published in 1792, while the third volume (1794) appears to have been published “par le cit.[oyen] Naigeon, l'An deuxième de la République Française une et indivisible” (repr.: *Encyclopédie méthodique: Philosophie ancienne et moderne*, Paris, 2012). Moreover, the lengthy, verbose *Discours préliminaire. Pour servir d'introduction à ce dictionnaire* (*Philos. anc. et mod.*, I, pp. II–XXXVI), reveals the author's revolutionary commitment when it declares that any book “that wishes to render itself universally and constantly beneficial” must above all be “thought and written with that freedom which is so necessary for the advance of reason, [which is] the sweetest and most effective remedy against the two greatest scourges to the human race, priests and kings” (*Philos. anc. et mod.*, I, p. XXII).

Naigeon intends (or claims) to challenge tradition even on a historiographical level. Historiographical tradition here means Stanley and Brucker, who are repeatedly criticized by Naigeon because, although they accomplished a huge amount of scholarly work, they proved to be “very superficial and verbose”, they limited themselves to “touching on the subject”, and committed “every kind of negligence”, misinterpreting the original texts (I, pp. VIII–XI; see also *Models*, II, p. 557). It was normal in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to accuse Brucker of excessive erudition to the detriment of the “philosophical spirit”, and this was often used to conceal the true debt to the *Historia critica philosophiae* (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 564–566). But Naigeon also objects to Brucker's method: in the critical note that concludes the article on Cardano, he criticises Brucker for having used modern works on the history of philosophy above all (Jonsius, Morhof, Thomasius, Buddeus . . .) rather than primary sources, and he seizes on a bibliographical mistake to dismiss the entire work (“his book is written without taste (*goût*), it lacks ideas, perspectives, and philosophy, and does not even have the merit of being a good collection of materials. [...] In a word, it should be rewritten in all of its parts”: *Philos. anc. et mod.*, III, pp. 938b–940b).

Naigeon recognises Diderot's dependence on Brucker, and explains that the encyclopaedist was weighed down with engagements, and in particular with the "description of the *arts et métiers*", and hence chose to rely on Brucker's work, limiting himself to the "function of interpreter". "In effect, his excerpts are often nothing more than a translation of those written by Brucker, whose order, method, and subdivisions he also follows. He simply had the skill of interspersing them with as much good taste as simplicity, with some of those ingenious and refined views, new and audacious thoughts, and profound reflections that are contained in all his works and that particularly characterize this eloquent philosopher". Thanks to these ideas and views, together with a "lively, energetic, and brisk style", Diderot succeeded in "banishing the monotony and dryness" of Brucker or Stanley (I, pp. VII–VIII).

Indeed, according to Naigeon, Diderot was unwilling to adapt himself to Brucker's history of philosophy: "he regretted not having given this part of the history of the progress of the human mind the attention and the care required by the importance of the subject, and he intended to make up for it in a second edition. His plan was vast and well-conceived; its fulfilment should have been preceded by an organic study and a detailed analysis of all the writers quoted by Brucker and Stanley; this route was certainly the best and the surest". But it remained a mere plan, the feasibility of which is in doubt, because, as Naigeon himself had previously observed, Diderot possessed the rarest literary and philosophical qualities, but not the inclination for edudition which is equally necessary for the history of philosophy. He was "absolutely incapable of that patience, that exactitude so necessary in examining the facts; and that scrupulous attention which in this dry research and discussion must constantly be paid to a multitude of minute objects, which still have their use, was beyond his capabilities". The attitude with which Diderot addressed the philosophical past is clearly described: "he behaved with the ancients just as he did with the moderns: he read them in his head, he quoted their thoughts in the original form they had taken, and identified himself with them to such an extent that, without even realising it, he sometimes gave them his own ideas and likewise took possession of theirs, more or less as happens with friends who share their possessions and live in mutual solidarity" (I, pp. VI–VII).

Among his critical considerations, Naigeon also mentions Le Gendre de Saint-Aubin (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 166–175), whose *Traité de l'opinion* "has nothing philosophical except its title and nothing useful except its quotations". He then pauses for a moment to confute Dutens' theories (*Philos. anc. et mod.*, I, pp. xv–xxi; on Dutens, see below, Chap. 3, Introd., a). The quantity of Naigeon's critical ideas, however, is not paralleled by the number of new ideas on the theorization of the historiography of philosophy. After beginning his *Discours préliminaire* with Bacon's well-known passage calling for "a history of the opinions held by the ancient philosophers" (*De augmentis scientiarum*, III, 4), Naigeon stresses the difference between erudition and philosophy, and finally limits himself to contemplating a "*philosophical history of the human intellect* considered in its various ages or, if you like, in its various moments of strength and weakness, reason and folly: then you would see, clearly defined, all the steps that man has made

so far towards error and truth" (*Philos. anc. et mod.*, I, p. x; the italics are in the text; on the concept of "history of the human intellect", see *Models*, II, pp. 76–77, 184 and 490–491). Naigeon's aim here is a "critical and reasoned work concerning philosophy or the general science of the ancients", but it can be extended to the whole course of human thought; indeed, in a paragraph added to Diderot's article 'Production', he states that "all the stable and courageous steps taken nowadays by rational philosophy on the arduous path of truth must be clearly pointed out in this philosophical dictionary" (*Philos. anc. et mod.*, III, p. 466a).

Yet there are some historiographical theories in the *Discours préliminaire*. Besides the general and certainly not original observation that the physics and metaphysics of the Greeks is "vague and obscure" because it lacked a "philosophical language" (which only developed after a long period of "meditation, experience, and observation"), emphasis is placed on the academic school, which "changed the method of philosophising of the ancients almost entirely, gradually accustomed the dogmatists to mitigating the audacity and temerity of their assertions, and enlightened the moderns as to the best way of proceeding in the search for truth". Although they used a "captious and pedantic dialectic", the Academics "were not useless to the progress of reason", unlike the Stoics, whose disputes concerned pointless questions (I, pp. XIII–XIV). The most original observations relate to Naigeon's materialistic principles: he does not believe that the Scholastic thinkers and theologians "would have used their talents any better" if they had lived in more enlightened times. Since they were conditioned by their "character" and "instinct", they would necessarily have maintained just as erroneous or vain positions. The only exception is Pascal, "the only truly great man that the Christian religion has taken from the sciences and whose reason and genius it has, so to say, paralysed at a stroke", making him "a famous martyr of the Christian faith". If Pascal had lived in the age of Euclid and Archimedes, he would have made great mathematical discoveries and risen to the pinnacle of "rational philosophy"; people like Arnauld, Nicole, Bossuet, Clarke, Ditton, and Cudworth, on the other hand, even if they had existed before the appearance of the Christian religion, would have been neither philosophers nor mathematicians, but would have repeated "the quibblings (*ergoteries*) and vain subtleties of the Megarians and the Scholastics" (I, pp. IV–V; on Pascal see the relevant entry, at the end of the *Philosophie ancienne et moderne*, from Condorcet's *Éloge de Pascal*: in the introduction, written by Naigeon, the author of the *Pensées* is described as "this atrabilious [that is to say, melancholic, according to the ancient Hippocratic terminology], devout man, who in the lucid intervals left by the religious fever that devoured him, and amidst his almost constant suffering, produced profound, vast, and audacious views, through which his original, subtle genius shone": II, p. 855a).

**1.4.3** Regarding the relationship between the articles on the history of philosophy of the *Encyclopédie* and those contained in the *Philosophie ancienne et moderne*, we must turn to the considerations made by Naigeon himself. In the *Discours préliminaire*, Naigeon states that the respect he feels for his friend Diderot and the awareness of his own inability to do any better or even to equal him, induced

him to preserve his articles “religiously”, except for some additions or amendments placed in square brackets. As for the other articles on the history of philosophy in the *Encyclopédie*, on the other hand, he re-arranged them freely, rewriting them totally or in part, according to necessity. He did this because the authors of these articles, engaged in other work or simply not equal to the task, “were satisfied to slavishly copy Huet, Deslandes, Rapin etc. without quoting them, and above all without correcting their inaccuracies or making up for their omissions” (I, p. VIII). However, more than its additions or rewritten parts, the greatest novelty of the *Philosophie ancienne et moderne* consists of the long entries on contemporary philosophers drawn up by Naigeon himself, which considerably modify this dictionary of the history of philosophy in a ‘modern’ sense.

Twenty-three out of a total 177 articles arranged in alphabetical order were written entirely by Naigeon himself. Besides the re-organization of previous entries (‘Académiciens, philosophie des’; ‘Baconisme’, done on the basis of Alexandre Deleyre’s *Analyse de la philosophie du chancelier F. Bacon* [1755]; ‘Campanella’; and ‘Cardan’) and historical and conceptual entries of considerable importance (‘Conscientiaires’, ‘Fatalisme et fatalité des Stoïciens’, ‘Monades’, ‘Ordre de l’univers’, ‘Origine du Mal’, ‘Religieux-irreligieux’), these articles concern thinkers of the previous century. Among them we can see some of the most renowned exponents of anti-Christian rationalism, while Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau, on the other hand, are missing. Thus we find Pascal and Berkeley (who is described as “a theologian under the guise of a philosopher”, who “used much of his intelligence and time to give some verisimilitude to chimeras”: I, p. 443a). Following these are Condillac and Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger – whose work *L’antiquité dévoilée par ses usages, ou Examen critique des principaux opinions, cérémonies et institutions religieuses et politiques* had been published posthumously by d’Holbach in 1766, with a biography written by Diderot – and then Collins, Diderot himself, Fontenelle (prefaced by an *éloge* written by Charles Pinot Duclos), Fréret, Hume, Dumarsais (whose booklet *Le philosophe*, mentioned above, is reproduced in its entirety: III, pp. 203–208), Meslier, Jean-Baptiste de Mirabaud, and John Toland.

The emphasis on the more radical thinkers gives the history of contemporary philosophy a particular slant, as if Naigeon had retraced the path of atheism in the period from the Regency to the Revolution (cf. Rétat, p. 453). From a methodological point of view, however, these articles are of little interest because Naigeon limits himself to providing lengthy excerpts from the writers’ various works (the articles on Condillac and Collins cover, respectively, 137 and 110 pages), adding few *réflexions*, if at all, in a paragraph at the beginning or the end, or in specific “editor’s notes” at the foot of the page. Among the various *additions*, we can mention, for example, the ‘Analyse raisonnée du traité de la nature humaine de Hobbes’, which takes the article ‘Hobbisme’ from 14 to 26 pages. This addition is explained by the fact that when he was writing the article on Hobbes, Diderot had not yet read the treatise *Human Nature*, which Naigeon defines as “one of the most beautiful works ever produced by the mind of man” (*Philos. anc. et mod.*, II, p. 705a; this work by Hobbes was translated into French by d’Holbach, Londres, 1772).

Naigeon sought the help of others too in his work of reorganization and updating. Roland de Croissy contributed the articles ‘Académiciens (philosophie des anciens)’, ‘Celts (théologie et philosophie des)’, ‘Dieu (idée de)’, and ‘Dieu de l’Orient’, derived – respectively – from Cicero’s *Academica* and its commentary by Pedro de Valencia (Antverpiae, 1596; French translation: Berlin, 1779), from Simon Pelloutier’s *Histoire des Celtes* (1741; II ed. 1770–1771), from Cudworth, and from Jean Le Clerc. Cudworth’s *System* also appears to be the source of the articles ‘Immatérialisme’, ‘Matérialiste’, ‘Mouvement (origine du)’, ‘Néant (création du)’ (written by the *citoyen* Rigault, with an introduction by Naigeon), ‘Plastique (nature)’, and ‘Polythéisme’. Of various origin are the articles ‘Bramines’ (taken from Alexander Dow’s *History of Indostan*, thanks to an unidentifiable Bergier), ‘Fétichisme’ (by Charles de Brosses), ‘Gassendisme’ (taken from the *Abrégé de la vie et du système de Gassendi*, par M. de Camburat, Bouillon, 1770), ‘Guèbres’ (from Boulanger), ‘Helvétianisme’ (from Jean-François de Saint-Lambert’s *Histoire de la vie et des oeuvres d’Helvétius*, publ. in Helvétius, *Le bonheur*, Londres, 1772), ‘Indiens’ (from G.-E.-J. Guilhem de Clermont-Lodève, baron de Sainte-Croix, *L’Ezour-Vedam, ou l’ancien commentaire du Vedam, contenant l’exposition des opinions religieuses et philosophiques des Indiens*, Yverdon [Avignon], 1778), ‘Manichéisme’, and ‘Sommona-Codom’ (from Bayle’s *Dictionnaire*, which also inspired other articles: cf. Rétat, p. 453, note 46), ‘Séminale (lumière)’ (from a letter written by Leibniz to the abbé Conti), ‘Spontanées (générations)’ (from Buffon), ‘Topilzin’ (from d’Holbach), ‘Vanini’ (from the biography written by David Durand, Rotterdam, 1717), and finally ‘D’Alembert’ and ‘Buffon’; the articles on the latter two, added to the end of the last volume, are taken from Condorcet’s *Éloges*. It is also worth noting that Batteux’s *Histoire des causes premières* is systematically used to complement the articles on the ancient philosophers as well as for the writing of the entries ‘Cartésianisme’ and ‘Système de l’âme’, and that ‘Épicuréisme’ is supplemented with lengthy passages from *Morale d’Épicure* by Batteux himself (on Batteux, see below, Sect. 2.3).

This composite package (which offers us in any case a picture of the literature on the history of philosophy currently circulating in the late eighteenth century) might give the impression of a certain ideological heterogeneity. Indeed, the frequent presence of writers like Cudworth and Batteux seems to contrast with Naigeon’s materialistic inspiration. But all doubts are dispelled here by the editor himself, who strongly criticizes the prejudices behind Batteux’s presentation of Epicurean doctrines, while the passages from Cudworth with their clearly spiritualistic tone are justified as an opportunity to offer “a little consolation” to feeble, devout minds (art. ‘Néant, création du’, *Philos. anc. et mod.*, III, p. 351a; but see also, a few pages below, the ‘Réflexions de l’éditeur’ which conclude the article ‘Mosaïque et chrétienne, philosophie’, where it is pointed out that “certain orthodox phrases used by Diderot in this article” are merely a concession to the “current mistake”, and that in reality he was “an atheist, and indeed a very resolute and convinced one”: p. 340b).

In practice, Naigeon’s anti-religious radicalism reveals itself on every occasion. It is enough to observe that the article ‘Jésus-Christ’, which in the *Encyclopédie* was

classified under the entry ‘Histoire et philosophie’, appears here as the ‘Histoire des superstitions anciennes et modernes’ (II, p. 766), and that the libertine image of Campanella as a hidden propagator of atheism is, in turn, questioned in the name of a rigorous and elitist conception of atheism: “As far as I am concerned, it seems to me that Campanella is much closer to fanaticism and enthusiasm than to atheism; let me add that he was not talented enough to be an atheist. Indeed, we should not think that everybody can reach the level of this opinion; on the contrary, it is for a limited number of people, whereas superstition, which is at the reach of all minds, is for this reason very common. Indeed, in order for us to have, as it were, some religion, we do not need education, lights, or reasoning: we simply need to be lazy, ignorant, and credulous; and all men are more or less like this. But in order to be an atheist, like Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle, Dumarsais, Helvétius, Diderot, and others, one needs to have observed and reflected much; one needs to possess extensive knowledge in several complicated sciences as well as a strong mind, which – as I have demonstrated elsewhere – is fundamentally a strength which involves the organic system as a whole. Well, some of these different but equally useful means are gifts from nature, who is not generous with them; others can only be acquired in time” (art. ‘Campanella’, I, p. 607).

In conclusion, it is Naigeon’s intention to complete that ideological revolution, the “seeds” of which Diderot – who lived in the age of “tyranny” and feared the “arbitrary deeds of the ministers”, the “intolerance of the priests”, and the “gruesome fanaticism of the parliament” – had managed to spread by concealing them here and there in his articles on the history of philosophy (art. ‘Production’, III, p. 466ab). This revolutionary project also had implications of a utopian, social nature, as in the case of the short but significant supplement to the article ‘Bacchionites’: “In effect”, remarks Naigeon speaking of the happiness attained by the followers of this cynical sect thanks to the abolition of private property, “what makes man evil is that which is yours and that which is mine: share goods and women, and try to discover the origin of some vices” (I, p. 290a). In this perspective, attention to the philosophies of the past seems to be limited to a few definite themes. Here, Naigeon’s reflection on the several supplements to the article ‘Aristotélisme’ remain valid: these supplements aim to present that which is most “exact” and “useful to know” in the doctrines of Aristotle and his followers, unless of course, “in order to study the more or less ingenious ancient systems, more or less contrary to experience and observation, we wish to waste precious time which could be used in research and meditation of a general and constant nature, more worthy, therefore of interesting and occupying the *bon esprit*” (I, p. 243a).

The first volume of *Philosophie ancienne et moderne* immediately received a positive review from de Lalande, who defined the work as “learned, curious, instructive, and useful to mankind” (JS, November 1791, p. 682). However, once the period of the Revolution was over, the strongly biased nature of the articles added by Naigeon was criticised by Degérando: “the new articles have certainly not won the approval of impartial people, who, as regards history above all, have every right to stand as judges” (Degérando<sup>1</sup>, p. 49). This criticism was accentuated in the second edition, where it is observed that the defect of “prejudice” that characterizes

Diderot's historiographical work becomes even greater in that of Naigeon, who "appears to apply himself only to finding authorities and examples in favour of the cause to which he had so regrettably warmed; he tries to subject all facts to it; in his eyes, philosophy is a matter of taking sides rather than a science; more laborious than Diderot, he has examined the documents and exploited the sources, but he is not equally talented in using them, and his heaviness is wearing" (Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, p. 137). The sectarian aspect of Naigeon, "one of the most terrible defenders of the philosophical party", was also denounced by the Catholic review *Mélanges de philosophie, d'histoire, de morale et de littérature* (II, 1807, p. 98), and then by Franck's *Dictionnaire*, which stated that, "although he claimed to possess profound thought and erudition", Naigeon "was nothing other than an editor, a compiler, a translator" (Franck, IV, p. 382). A century after the publication of *Philosophie ancienne et moderne*, however, Picavet observed that the articles on the Academics, Cardano, Collins, and Diderot still deserved to be consulted; as for the speculative aspect, Naigeon is judged to be superior to Maréchal, another fierce propagator of atheism, but absolutely inferior to Diderot, d'Holbach, and the *idéologues* of the first generation (Picavet, p. 144). Today, Naigeon's historiographical work looks irrevocably out of date, like that of La Harpe, but precisely for this reason it is of particular interest from a historical and cultural perspective, since it represents the first significant document of the 'revolutionary use' of the philosophical past.

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## Chapter 2

# The Impact of the *esprit des Lumières* on the History of Philosophy

Gregorio Piaia, Giuliano Bergamaschi, and Laura Scarduelli

### Introduction

Gregorio Piaia

(a) *The history of philosophy and the histoire de l'esprit humain*

“No history is more interesting than the history of philosophers”, observed the *Journal encyclopédique* when presenting Savérien’s *Histoire des philosophes modernes*. It went on: “Men who, with their constant dedication and the power of their genius, lift the veil of prejudice from nature; men who enlighten our souls, raising them up and placing them above the whims of fate where that may find happiness: we can never be reminded too often of such men. But to write their history is much more difficult than writing the history of a conqueror. Battles, sieges, ambitious projects, or some act of mercy that shines out in the course of a barbarous life: all this can be easily depicted. But to succeed in grasping those

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elements that characterize the simple, uniform, and even obscure life of a sage; to take those delicate nuances that reveal the innermost part of the soul, to follow the wanderings of the mind, to find the fixed point among the feelings and, showing as much courage as skill, reject those opinions that were imposed by fanaticism, envy, or ignorance: this is the task of those who write the history of a philosopher” (JE, 1760, II/3, p. 3). “How important is the use of the history of philosophy!”, observed the Calvinist refugee Paul-Jérémie Bitaubé, a translator of Homer and a member of the Berlin Academy as well as a ‘foreign affiliate’ to the *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*. “If it is certain that, before arriving at the truth, men stray in various ways, it is extremely important to know the mistakes made by those who preceded them; we see the mistakes made by others, but we might have made them ourselves: mistakes thus help to establish truth. Even more than that: the edifice of the sciences, like those of Egyptian pyramids built by the work of several generations, is the work of the whole of mankind”. Hence we need to use the opinions of the ancients as “terms of reference” and to rescue some truths “from oblivion” (P.-J. Bitaubé, ‘De l’influence des belles-lettres sur la philosophie’, in *Histoire de l’Académie Royale des Sciences et Belles-Lettres*, Année MDCCLXVII, Berlin, 1769, p. 490).

These considerations effectively summarize some of the features that characterized the historiography of philosophy in France during the second half of the eighteenth century: a clear departure from traditional political and military historiography, reflecting the pride of the *philosophe*, aware of his role in society; a typically French attention to the inner workings of *esprit* and *coeur* in each philosopher; a ‘critical’ orientation aiming to distinguish what is valid from what is not; and the importance of a retrospective survey of the philosophies of the past, even when they appear to us to be studded with errors. As we have seen, these themes and attitudes were already present in the works produced in the first half of the eighteenth century, and they became widespread during the course of the century, thus showing the spread of the *esprit des lumières* even in the specific field of the historiography of philosophy. Indeed, there is no break between Deslandes’ *Histoire critique de la philosophie* (which was the first French work to show independence and completeness both in its theoretical bases and its interpretation) and the historico-philosophical literature produced in the following decades up to the age of the Revolution. It is true that the middle of the century saw the appearance of Brucker’s *Historia critica*, which was a necessary point of reference in France too; and it was no mere chance that, after suggesting the reading of “the most renowned philosophers of the past centuries” (Descartes, Gassendi, Newton, and Wolff), Formey also mentioned two general histories of philosophy: Brucker’s history, which he described as “the most accomplished work available in this genre”, admirable for its “vast erudition”, the “clarity and order” of its exposition, and its “firmness in judgement”, and, as a fall-back for those who do not read Latin, Deslandes’ *Histoire critique* (S. Formey, *Conseils pour former une bibliothèque peu nombreuse mais choisie*, Berlin, 1746, art. 11: ‘Philosophie’, pp. 8–9; on Formey as a historian of philosophy, see below, Sect. 8.1). But as we have seen in the case of Diderot, Brucker was used above all as a great warehouse of information and

his theoretical and methodological lessons did not bear fruit, while the taste of the *public* – as the marquis d'Argens, who was much more astute than Formey, realised at the time – was leaning towards the products of superficial and facile popularization.

The position of the genre of the history of philosophy with respect to the previous decades was therefore unchanged: the general histories of philosophy remained outside of the university environment and increasingly aimed to fight for or against the spread of the *lumières*. This situation is of considerable interest for the history of culture and ideas, but of little importance from the point of view of the internal history of the 'genre'. Indeed, that lack of confidence which, as we have already seen, characterized the general treatments of the history of philosophy in France at the turn of the eighteenth century prevailed throughout the second half of the century; this was a situation which intensified under the impetus of two tendencies which were distinct but concordant in their results. The first was the tendency for the history of philosophy to be encompassed within the more general *histoire de l'esprit humain*, which displayed more clearly the multiple interrelations and manifestations characterizing the progress of the human mind through the centuries, as well as the obstacles to be overcome, the progress to be made, and the meaning of this historical course itself. Deslandes, who nurtured the project of a special *histoire de l'esprit et du coeur humain*, had already expanded the boundaries of the *histoire critique de la philosophie* far beyond its specific object, while Le Gendre de Saint-Aubin had given his *Traité de l'opinion* (1733) the subtitle *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de l'esprit humain* (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 166–175, 184–185).

Following in the wake of Saint-Aubin, but with a stronger *esprit philosophique*, was d'Argens, whose *Mémoires secrets de la République des Lettres* appeared in a second edition under the title *Histoire de l'esprit humain*. Indeed, we have already seen how in his *Discours préliminaire* D'Alembert did not outline a history of modern philosophy strictly speaking, but a "history of the progress of the human mind from the revival of letters onwards". Bitaubé, quoted above, presented his study of the relationship between literature and philosophy as a condensed "philosophical history of the human mind" and, furthermore, endeavoured to justify the pre-eminence given to this historical and empirical approach ("It frequently happens that, when we wish to lay down a principle, we first uphold it with reasoning, then we try to adjust history to it. My path goes in the opposite direction. Consulting experience, I have placed before your eyes a faithful picture of our progress and our digressions, so that my reasoning is nothing other than induction from facts": Bitaubé, 'De l'influence des belles-lettres', p. 490). As for Savérien's "history of philosophers", it joins other works on the "history of the progress of the human mind" emanating from the different sciences, while in Condillac's *Introduction à l'étude de l'histoire* the history of philosophy constitutes a section of the history of ancient and modern culture. "The history of the human mind and the path it follows, if we may say so, in the discovery of truth is the most amusing spectacle that can present itself to the eyes of a philosopher, and perhaps also the most useful one for all men", observed Naigeon with respect to Bacon's *Instauratio*

*magna*, referring to the two concepts of “usefulness” and “pleasure” which were a central topic for every Enlightenment author (*Philos. ancienne et moderne*, I, p. 291b). It should not be thought, however, that the notion of *histoire de l'esprit humain* was restricted to the circle of the *philosophes*: the Jansenist Pluquet also made it clear that the history of deterministic doctrines is to be included in this field, and even constituted “one of its most curious parts” (see below, Sect. 3.1.3).

Though the link with the history of the human mind represented the most common denominator shared by French works on the history of philosophy in the eighteenth century, the nature of this relationship was varied. Besides a simple juxtaposition or *assemblage* of the various manifestations of the human mind (corresponding to the traditional sections of polyhistory, albeit unified by the *esprit philosophique*, as in the case of d’Argens), we find texts in which the distinction between the ancient literary genres disappears and the history of philosophy seems to dissolve and become transfigured into a new genre, more comprehensive and significant, namely the *histoire de l'esprit humain*, here understood in a profound sense. This follows the principle that, “like the universe, the human sciences form a whole, whose parts are internally related and gravitate, we may say, towards one another, clarify one another and, despite the almost infinite distance that separates many of them, contribute towards the general harmony” (Bitaubé, ‘De l’influence des belles-lettres’, p. 470). In this way, the specific contributions offered by literary, philosophical, scientific, artistic, political, and economic historiography appear to merge into a genetic and progressive whole, in which what matters is not so much the individual fact – a figure, an event, or a doctrine – as the “sense” acquired by these elements with reference to a philosophy of history and culture whose purpose is to supplant the theological Augustinian concept that had been vigorously defended by Bossuet a few decades earlier. Hence, as far as the history of philosophy is concerned, less importance was given to the biographies of the philosophers and the succession and classification of the sects, which had been the framework of every general history of philosophy for centuries, and what moved into the foreground was the periodization, based on the *révolutions* of the human mind and providing the key to interpreting the entire historical development.

This direction was followed, for example, by the second part of D’Alembert’s *Discours* and by Turgot’s contemporary *Tableau philosophique des progrès successifs de l'esprit humain* (1750), which opened with the opposition between the fixed nature of natural phenomena, “subject to constant laws” and “inscribed in a circle of unchanging revolutions”, and the “ever-changing spectacle”, century after century, of the history of humanity. “Reason, passions, and freedom unceasingly produce new events: all epochs are interconnected by a succession of cause and effect which links the present state of the world to all its previous states”. There is no contradiction between the sensationalist epistemology evoked by Turgot and the uneven development of society and culture. “Is not nature the same everywhere?”, he asks, “and if it leads all men to the same truths, if even their mistakes resemble one another, why do they not all keep at the same pace on this path that has been traced for them? The human mind certainly proves that progress follows the same principle everywhere; but nature, which distributes its gifts unequally, has endowed

some minds with abundant talents while refusing them to others; circumstances either help to develop these talents or leave them to vanish in darkness; it is from the infinite variety of circumstances that the inequality characterizing the progress of nations derives" (*Oeuvres de Turgot*, ed. G. Schelle, I, Paris, 1913, pp. 214–215 and 217; concerning the function of "circumstances" in Condillac, see below, Sect. 2.4.4.4.).

The picture sketched by Turgot with a rapid but steady hand reveals moments and figures that belong to the general history of philosophy: in Greece philosophers appeared very late on, preceded by poets; they limited themselves to producing "ingenious systems", and were linked to the "spirit of the sect"; "their wavering metaphysics concerning the most important truths was often superstitious or impious, and was nothing other than a mass of poetical fables or a tissue of unintelligible words; their physics was nothing but a frivolous metaphysics. Morals, although still imperfect, were less affected by the infancy of reason . . .". The greatest philosopher of Antiquity was Aristotle, who "was the first to bring the flame of precise analysis to philosophy and the arts". The fall of the Roman Empire was accompanied by a general decline, and Greek philosophy was mixed with "Oriental superstitions" and a "host of hollow allegories". The advent of Christianity – "a light a thousand times more precious than that represented by letters and philosophy" – did not succeed in healing the deep "wound to mankind" caused by the recurrent barbarian ravages; however, precisely "in the midst of ignorance, imperceptible progress prepared for the extraordinary successes of the last centuries", thanks above all to the "lights" the Arabs spread to the West. So the age of rebirth arrived: "Rise, Europe, from the night that cloaked you! O immortal names of Medici, Leo X, Francis I, let you be consecrated for ever! [. . .] Century of Louis, century of the great men, century of reason, hasten!". Galileo, Kepler, Bacon, and Newton embody mark the new conquests of the mind, but Descartes above all deserves the most enthusiastic praise ("What mortal dares reject the lights of all epochs and the same notions that he considered to be the most certain? He seems to want to extinguish the flame of the sciences just to light it again on his own with the pure flame of reason. [. . .] O great Descartes, you were not always given the chance to find truth, but at least you destroyed the tyranny of error"). And here, beside Newton, is his "rival" Leibniz, who "embraces with his broad intelligence all the objects of the human mind", while the various sciences appear destined to undergo further progress, "because we gradually discover the mutual dependence of all truths linked to one another, where one illuminates the other" (*Oeuvres de Turgot*, pp. 224, 227–228, 230, and 233–235; as regards the emphasis on the figure of Descartes, see, for example, the discourse by the famous abbé de Saint-Pierre *Sur le grand Homme, et sur l'Homme illustre*, where Descartes – along with Epaminondas and Scipio – embodies, in its most complete form, the model of the "great man", who is distinguished from "illustrious men" by his "great virtue": Ch.-I. Castel de Saint-Pierre, *Ouvrages de politique*, Rotterdam, 1738–1740, XI, pp. 48–61; cf. M.L. Perkins, 'Descartes and the abbé de Saint-Pierre', *Modern Language Quarterly*, XIX, 1958, pp. 294–302).

This historiographical trend appears to be most advanced in Condorcet's *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* (1795), which, we



must remember, fell decisively outside the genre of the ‘history of philosophy’ as it had taken shape in Germany during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yet we will examine this work in detail here because it is emblematic of the transformation which the historiography of philosophy underwent in France, leading to a true “philosophy of history, which rendered meaningless those works based on views by then redundant, even though in the past they had served to prepare for what was to come” (Garin, *Dal Rinascimento all’Illuminismo*, p. 274). It was not by chance that this process reached its climax during the years of the Revolution, which saw the emergence of the movement of ideas whose fundamental means of propagation had been the *Encyclopédie*. Originating as the product of the systemization of learning, as a ‘secondary tool’, the history of philosophy, merged with Condorcet’s *histoire de l’esprit humain*, became the spearhead of the revolutionary battle, compared to which even Naigeon’s *Philosophie ancienne et moderne* had a merely supportive role, despite its ideological commitment. But precisely because it was so closely connected to current political events, this radical transformation of the methods and purposes was of short duration: less than 10 years after the publication of the *Esquisse d’un tableau historique*, the appearance of Degérando’s *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie* was to mark the ‘restoration’ or rather the renewed foundation of the genre of the history of philosophy in France, beyond the confident certitudes of the philosophical history of the human mind.

(b) *The contribution of Voltaire*

In this context, what categories and theories did the two great *maîtres à penser* of Enlightenment culture, Montesquieu and Voltaire, contribute to the historiography of philosophy through the development of the *histoire de l’esprit humain*? The *Esprit des lois* makes a limited number of references to the history of philosophy, though it contains some original points, such as the relationship between the condemnation of interest loans by the Scholastics, “infatuated” with Aristotle’s philosophy (“once brought to the West, [this philosophy] was particularly appreciated by subtle minds, which, during the ages of ignorance, correspond to the *beaux-esprits*”), and the slide of commerce into fraud, attributed to the Jews (*De l’esprit des lois*, XXI, 20, in Montesquieu, *Oeuvres complètes*, II, Paris, 1951, p. 639). But let us direct our attention to Montesquieu’s *Thoughts* on philosophy: the systems of the ancient Greeks are all judged to be erroneous, because “they did not perceive the difference between positive and relative qualities; just as Aristotle was mistaken with his dry, humid, warm, and cold, so Plato and Socrates were mistaken with their beautiful, good, mad, and wise”. Indeed, Montesquieu insists in another of his *Thoughts*, “the terms beautiful, good, noble, great, perfect, are attributes of objects related to the beings who consider them. We should bear in mind this principle: it is the sponge that erases most prejudices. It is the scourge of the whole of ancient philosophy, of Aristotle’s physics and Plato’s metaphysics; and if one reads the dialogues of the latter one can see that they are nothing but a tissue of sophisms produced by ignorance of this principle. Father Malebranche committed a thousand sophisms because he ignored it” (*Mes pensées*, nos. 2062, 2092–2093, in *Oeuvres complètes*, I, pp. 1537, 1545–1546; moreover, see nos.

2094–2109, pp. 1546–1549, on the ancient philosophers and some of the moderns, and no. 2148, pp. 1557–1559, on the relationship between paganism, philosophy, and Christianity; let us remember here that in his youth Montesquieu had written a text, subsequently lost, entitled *De la damnation éternelle des Païens*, where he maintained that the ancient philosophers do not deserve to be damned).

Of fundamental importance to our enquiry are Voltaire's historiographical theories. In the introduction to *Le siècle de Louis XIV* (written in 1738 but published only in 1751), the author makes it clear that "it is not only the life of Louis XIV that we propose to write; we have a greater object in view. We mean to set before posterity not only a portrait of one man's actions but that of the spirit of mankind in general, in the most enlightened of all ages". The 'philosophical' perspective adopted by Voltaire is soon apparent as he modifies the canons of the erudite tradition: the current periodization, which aimed to provide a sort of framework covering the whole chronology of human history, is replaced by the distinction between 'common' centuries, which are fundamentally similar and worthy of little attention, and 'strong' centuries, in which the human mind finds its greatest forms of expression: "Every age has produced heroes and politicians; all nations have experienced revolutions, and all histories are virtually alike for those who seek only to furnish their memories with facts. But those who think, or, even more rare, those who have taste, will find but four ages in the history of the world. These four happy ages are those in which the arts were brought to perfection, and which, by serving as the era of greatness of the human mind, are examples for posterity". The first age is that of Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great, Pericles and Demosthenes, Plato and Aristotle, Apelles, Phidias, and Praxiteles. The second age is that of Caesar and Augustus, in which the greatest Latin writers were at work. The third age is subsequent to the fall of Byzantium: "this was the age of Italy's glory", when the human mind attained perfection in all fields, except in music and also in experimental philosophy, which was unknown before the time of Galileo. The last age "is that known by the name of the age of Louis XIV, and is perhaps that which comes closest to perfection of all the four"; in particular, it is only in this period that we see the affirmation of "sound philosophy" (*The Works of Voltaire. A Contemporary Version*, transl. W.F. Fleming, New York, 1901, vol. XII: *Age of Louis XIV*, Part I, pp. 5–7; regarding this subdivision into four epochs, see Goulemot, *Discours, révolutions et histoire*, pp. 463–465; but also, in the *Observations sur le progrès continué de la raison universelle* by the abbé de Saint-Pierre, the parallel between fourth-century Athens and the "most civilized and enlightened nation in the world in this century", France and England: Castel de Saint-Pierre, *Ouvrages de politique*, XI, p. 276).

Voltaire omits the usual bio-bibliographical profiles (the essential information is provided separately, in the 'Catalogue de la plupart des écrivains français qui ont paru dans le siècle de Louis XIV, pour servir à l'histoire littéraire de ce temps', which also includes three philosophers: Descartes, Gassendi, and Bayle) and he summarises the development of modern philosophy in Chapter XXIX, which is devoted to the 'Progress of the Sciences'. Initially, the situation with regard to this was hardly encouraging: "This happy age, which has seen a revolution in the

human mind, did not seem destined for this because, to begin with philosophy, it seemed very unlikely at the time of Louis XIV that it would have emerged from the chaos into which it was plunged". The Inquisition in Italy, Spain, and Portugal and the religious conflicts in France and England were not conditions that favoured the progress of reason. The "weak attempts" by Bacon, Galileo, Torricelli, and others were not enough to free the schools from "absurdity" and the world from "ignorance". The *révolution* undertaken by Descartes is described in the typically incisive style that Voltaire used, and which made him the master of a 'historicism' based on radical and effective antitheses which was long to prevail in the field of historical and cultural research: "Then Descartes appeared; he did the opposite of what should have been done: instead of studying nature, he attempted to guess at her". Yet despite this mistaken approach, which led Descartes to build "an imaginary edifice" in physics, his new method had influence, and was of great historical importance. Indeed, "to destroy the chimeras of Peripateticism was itself a great thing, even though it was done by means of other chimeras. These two phantoms combat one another; they fell one after another; and reason finally raised itself up on their ruins" (*Age of Louis XIV*, Part II, pp. 277–279). Voltaire was later to devote a *Historical eulogy* to "reason", into whose basic framework, taken from the history of the human mind, he inserts a short but delightful philosophical tale (*Éloge historique de la raison* [1775], in Voltaire, *Romans et contes*, ed. R. Groos, Paris, 1961, pp. 516–524).

But it was outside France, more precisely in Florence with the *Accademia del Cimento* and in England with the Royal Society, that "sound philosophy", that is to say, experimental enquiry into nature, developed to the highest degree; the British, above all, with the Royal Society, were ahead of other nations. In his *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (London, 1733; French version: *Lettres philosophiques sur les Anglais*, Rouen, 1734) the Anglophile Voltaire had already pointed out the contributions made by Bacon and Locke and had established a comparison between Descartes and Newton on the Plutarchan model of the "parallel lives" used by Fontenelle in his *Éloge de M. Newton* (1733). In particular, he had contrasted the wise Locke (who rightly limited himself to outlining the "history of the soul" to explain how man's reason functions) with all the other ancient and modern philosophers, who invented instead a "novel of the soul". Here he had compiled a short doxographical survey, which started with the Greeks and ended with Descartes and Malebranche, passing through the Fathers, St Bernard, and the multitude of Scholastic doctors (*The Works of Voltaire*, vol. XIX, Part II, pp. 27–33, 'Chancellor Bacon', and 33–39, 'Locke'). As for the ancient and medieval philosophers, here Voltaire took Bayle's *Dictionnaire* as his source, but we should remember that there were many doxographical collections on the soul in the 'clandestine' literature of the first half of the eighteenth century and they were to appear again, for example, in d'Holbach (*Système de la nature, ou des lois du monde physique et du monde moral*, London, 1774, I, p. 103).

The important role of the English philosophers is also emphasised in *Le siècle de Louis XIV*, which mentions the debate on the ancients and moderns that ended, as far as philosophy is concerned, with the undisputed supremacy of the latter. "There is",

observes Voltaire with his usual decisiveness, “not one of the ancient philosophers whose works are now used for the instruction of the youth of any of the enlightened nations. Locke alone would be a great example of the advantage that our age has over the finest ages of Greece. From Plato down to him there is one great chasm, no one during all that interval having explained the operations of the soul; and a person who should be acquainted with all that Plato has written, and acquainted with that only, would have very little knowledge, and even that erroneous”. While recognizing Plato’s “eloquence” and “the service he rendered to the sages of all nations” with the *Apology of Socrates*, Voltaire stresses the untenability of certain Platonic doctrines concerning God, the world, and the soul. After mentioning the men of science active in Germany and Italy, the survey closes with a *topos* that recurs among ‘modernist’ historians of philosophy: “in the last age, mankind acquired throughout Europe greater light than in all the ages that preceded it” (*The Works of Voltaire*, vol. XII: *Age of Louis XIV*, Part II, Ch. XXX, ‘The polite arts’, pp. 293–297; concerning the opposition between English thought, judged to be exempt from philosophical sectarianism, and Cartesianism, see also the entry ‘Secte’ [1765], in the *Dictionnaire philosophique*).

*Le siècle de Louis XIV* examines only one period in the history of the human mind, whereas the *Essai sur les mœurs et l’esprit des nations* (1756), which deals with the period from Charles the Great to Louis XIII and is preceded by a general survey of previous history (entitled *La philosophie de l’histoire*) widens its perspective and embraces the historical course of mankind in its entirety. In this case too there are significant links or parallels with the history of philosophy. More than judgements on medieval thought, which reflect the commonplaces typical of eighteenth century-historiography, what is worth noting, for example, is the dissertation ‘De la connaissance de l’âme’, and part of the initial chapters of the *Philosophie de l’histoire* which correspond to what, in general histories of philosophy, was usually the chapter concerning the ‘origins’. The traditional learned, theological approach is replaced here by an enquiry into the ‘natural’ origin of the notions of soul and God. These simple and unmediated notions, observes Voltaire, are the same notions as those adopted by country people before they are educated through catechism. Indeed, “nature has been too compassionate towards them to turn them into metaphysicians; this nature is the same always and everywhere. It induced the early societies, when they went through extraordinary calamities, to perceive that there was some higher being than man. Likewise, it made them perceive that in man there is something that acts and thinks. This faculty was not distinguished from that of life; and the word ‘soul’ always meant ‘life’ among the ancients, that is to say, among the Syrians and the Chaldeans, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and those who finally established themselves in a part of Phoenicia [= the Hebrews]”. So, when did the idea that “in our physical being” there is another being which has a metaphysical nature emerge? The most ancient men, “entirely preoccupied by their own needs”, did not have the opportunity to “deceive themselves as the philosophers do”; but later on, in “more civilised societies”, some had enough free time to reflect, and it happened, for example, that a recurring apparition of a dead relative in a dream triggered a psychological and sociological

mechanism which was then to give rise to the idea of the soul as a metaphysical entity (*La philosophie de l'histoire*, ed. J.H. Brumfitt, Geneva and Toronto, 1969<sup>2</sup>, pp. 98–99).

Greek philosophy is dealt with in the short chapter entitled ‘Des sectes des Grecs’, where information is mixed with *réflexions* and particular emphasis is placed on political connections. Unlike the peoples of the East, the Greeks were able to devote themselves freely to philosophical speculation and this made them “the most ingenious people in the world”, just as in the present century the English have become “the most enlightened nation” because they are allowed to think with impunity. The Greeks ended up by abusing their *esprit*, but – except in the case of Socrates – they were never restrained by their governments (*La philosophie de l'histoire*, Ch. XXVI, pp. 178–180; see also the relevant notes, pp. 302–303). This outline can be integrated with the shorter treatments on the ancient philosophers that are contained in later works and are all written in the brilliant, conversational tone of critical reflection, far from any form of systematic exposition. See for example, in the *Philosophe ignorant* (1766), paragraphs XXXIX–XLV, devoted to Zoroaster, the Brahmins, Confucius, and the Greek philosophers, in particular Epicurus and the Stoics; or see the entries on Plato and Socrates added in the appendix to the *Dictionnaire philosophique*, or again the entry on Aristotle in the *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie* (1770–1774).

In this entry let us note the positive judgement on logic, with which Aristotle opposed the “captious reasoning” that the Greeks and Plato himself were prone to, and therefore “rendered an important service to the human mind, preventing all ambiguities: because it is ambiguities that bring about all misunderstandings in philosophy, theology, and public affairs”. Here Voltaire brings his subject up to the present by observing that the “disastrous Seven Years’ war” between France and England was provoked by a misunderstanding, but then he lowers his tone and observes that Aristotle’s rules are useful but not necessary for those who have “innate good sense” and are “accustomed to reasoning”. By contrast, “nobody understands his physics, but more probably Aristotle understood himself and was understood in his age. Today the same words are no longer associated with the same ideas”. Here Voltaire mentions the principles of matter, form, privation, potency and act, and remarks that they are not as ridiculous or extravagant as they might seem to us at a first sight, in an attempt, albeit modest, to historicize, in contrast with his more dismissive judgements. Voltaire’s brief observations also touch on research concerning zoology (“the best book of Antiquity, because in this case Aristotle made use of his eyes”), the theme of the eternity of the world, metaphysics, and finally morals, which is defined as “excellent” just like all the others, “because there are no two morals. Those of Confucius, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, are absolutely the same. God has placed knowledge of the good in all hearts, together with some inclination towards evil” (*Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, in *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, vol. XXXIX, N. Cronk and Chr. Mervaud eds, Oxford, 2008, pp. 1, 4–5, 8; on this theory of deist origin, see *Le philosophe ignorant*, § XXXVIII: “It seems to me that morals is so universal, so calculated by the universal Being who gave us form, so destined to act as

a counterweight to our ruinous passions, that in my eyes all philosophers, from Zoroaster up to lord Shaftesbury, teach the same morals, even though they all have different conceptions concerning the principle of things”: Voltaire, *Mélanges*, ed. J. Van den Heuvel, Paris, 1961, p. 901).

We could continue with a list of examples. We could also assemble the references and points concerning the history of philosophy scattered through Voltaire’s literary production and his strictly philosophical works under the framework provided by *Essai sur les mœurs* and *Le siècle de Louis XIV*. It is sufficient to think of the dialogue in *Zadig, ou la destinée* between an Egyptian, an Indian, an inhabitant of Cathay, a Greek, and a descendant of the Scythians, whose subject matter is the first principle; or, to mention a less well-known work, the very short apologue *Aventure indienne*, whose protagonist is Pythagoras who, “as everybody knows, during his stay in India attended the school of the gymnosophists where he learnt the language of animals and that of plants” (*Romans et contes*, pp. 35–38 and 513–515; concerning the *Songes de Platon*, Voltaire’s first philosophical tale, and his studies on Plato while he resided at Cirey, see in particular J. Van Den Heuvel, *Voltaire dans ses contes. De Micromégas à L’ingénu*, Paris, 1967, pp. 58–67; but see also, on the presence and use of ancient philosophers in Voltaire, an extensive chapter in Mat-Hasquin, *Voltaire et l’antiquité grecque*, pp. 249–287).

But, unless we limit ourselves to providing a simple repertory of information, we would inevitably create an unnatural reconstruction, giving a false impression of systematicity in works whose consistency is very tenuous from a historiographical point of view, and aim entirely to propagate the *lumières*. The way in which Voltaire approached the history of philosophy was readily imitated by his contemporaries, but as the culture of the *lumières* gradually receded, the methodological inadequacies became increasingly clear, as we can see from the judgements of Degérando. Indeed, in the first edition of his *Histoire*, Degérando’s assessment is balanced and shows a degree of deference towards the *maître à penser*: “Voltaire, who was not foreign to any branch of literature, certainly did not remain indifferent towards this one [= the history of philosophy]; in particular, his *Essai sur les mœurs* and nearly all of his philosophical works contain parallels concerning the opinions formulated in Antiquity, which always reveal his lively, sharp, swift, light, and exquisite style but in which one should not always seek profundity, precision [*justesse*], and above all rigorous exactitude” (Degérando<sup>1</sup>, I, p. 48). But in the second edition the judgement becomes decisively negative: reviewing the “auxiliary works” concerning the historiography of philosophy, Degérando observes that the *Esprit des mœurs*, despite its fame, is much less valuable than Adam Ferguson’s *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1766) and that, apart from the “attractiveness of style”, it is “superficial”, rests on second-hand sources, and is too partial in highlighting only the “errors and vices” of mankind, while neglecting the more positive aspects (Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, p. 172).

### (c) *The history of philosophy in Rousseau*

In the panorama of the *histoire de l’esprit humain*, Rousseau’s ‘counter-history’ has a place of its own (cf. Dagen, Ch. IV, pp. 257–298). It is significant that in

1750 the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* was awarded a prize by the Academy of Dijon (in year in which Turgot's *Tableau philosophique* came out) and it was published in the following year, at the same time as *Le siècle de Louis XIV* and D'Alembert's *Discours préliminaire*. Rousseau's *Discours* is in its way a history of the human mind, not lacking in elements concerning the history of philosophy. The first part opens with the famous reference to the "great and beautiful spectacle" of man who, "using the lights of reason", dispels "the darkness in which nature had entangled him" and launches himself into the search for knowledge of the outer and inner world. The crucial moment in this development is the "re-establishment" of the sciences and the arts that the Dijon academicians had placed at the centre of their *question*. The usual historiographical themes emerge again here: the "barbarism" into which Europe had fallen during the Middle Ages, when "a certain scientific jargon, even more contemptible than ignorance, had usurped the name of science"; the urgent need for "a revolution to lead men back to the common sense"; the fall of Constantinople and the flight to the West of the "remains of ancient Greece"; and the revival of the "art of writing" and, subsequently, of the "art of thinking" . . . But the text soon changes its tone, since for Rousseau the sciences and the arts, which originate in the needs of the mind and are the "ornament" of society, finally stifle in men "the sense of that primitive freedom they seemed to be born to, make them love their slavery, and turn them into so-called 'civilized peoples'" (*Discours* [...] *sur cette question* [...]: *Si le rétablissement des sciences et des arts a contribué à épurer les mœurs*, in J.-J. Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, III, Paris, 1966, pp. 6–7).

For Rousseau in civilized society, founded on appearance, corruption has spread at the same pace as progress in the sciences and the arts. This is a sort of historical rule, confirmed by the events that took place in ancient Egypt (which "becomes the cradle of philosophy and the fine arts and, immediately afterwards, a prey to Cambyse"), Greece, Rome, Byzantium, and today's China. These depraved societies are contrasted with the rare examples of virtuous simplicity and "happy ignorance", as in the case of ancient Sparta, quite different from Athens, "the land of orators and philosophers". Mention is made here of the "praise of ignorance" expressed by Socrates, who was "the wisest of all men" and who – were he alive today – "would continue to disdain our vain sciences". Besides Socrates, Cato the elder is mentioned, the enemy of artful Greek culture which had undermined the virtue of the more ancient Romans ("Rome filled with philosophers and orators; military discipline was neglected, agriculture was disparaged, the sects were embraced, and the fatherland was forgotten. The sacred names of freedom, unselfishness, obedience to the law were replaced by those of Epicurus, Zeno, Arcesilaus"). The 'enlightened' perspective in which it was usual to view the history of philosophy and the sciences is now reversed: this is no longer the history of the mistakes made by men in their attempt to approach truth, which fully succeeded only during the last century, but the history of the decline of the human race, because "the proud efforts we made to leave the happy ignorance in which eternal wisdom had placed us" have engendered nothing but luxury, corruption, and enslavement (*Oeuvres complètes*, III, pp. 10–15).

It is in this context that we must place the final allusions to the doctrines of a few modern philosophers (Berkeley, La Mettrie, Mandeville, and Hobbes, labelled as “a pack of charlatans”) and to Spinoza’s “dangerous reveries”, spread and perpetuated by the “terrible art” of printing, which, it is hoped, will be banned. Nevertheless, this rejection of ancient and modern philosophers in the name of “true philosophy” (which consists in knowing how to “listen to the voice of one’s conscience in the silence of the passions”) is accompanied by an acknowledgement of the greatness of those who are able to independently pursue the paths of knowledge, detaching themselves from the crowd of repeaters and compilers. “No masters were needed by those whom nature had destined to create as disciples. Masters of the human race such as Verulam, Descartes, Newton, had no masters themselves; and what guide could have led them as far as their vast genius took them?”. Only the few who, using their own capabilities, are able to surpass these great men should be allowed to devote themselves to the study of the sciences and the arts; to them alone “it is proper to erect monuments to the glory of the human mind” (*Oeuvres complètes*, III, pp. 27–29).

The references to the history of philosophy become more detailed in Rousseau’s reply to the objections that the former king of Poland Stanislaus Leszczyński had raised against the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*. The first part of this response closes in fact with arguments of a historical nature, in which Rousseau follows the relationship between the sciences and religion in order to prove that the latter, in its most genuine state, has no need of knowledge, while the development of culture has always damaged faith. Indeed, the ancient Hebrews were reluctant to study the sciences (Rousseau does not mention Solomon, whom the historiographical tradition had always presented as a great ‘philosopher’) and even in the Hellenistic age culture was not easily disseminated, to such an extent that Joseph Flavius and Philo of Alexandria, “who elsewhere would have been but mediocre people, were considered by them to be prodigious”. The contrast between the Sadducees (“Jerusalem’s philosophers”) and the Pharisees is equated with the antagonism which has always characterized the relationship between “doctors” and “philosophers”, “that is to say between those who turn their brain into a repertory of others’ science and those who claim proudly to have a science of their own”. With the advent of the new Law, the faith’s exclusion of the sciences did not change, because Christ did not turn to the world’s wise men but preferred the small and the humble, and his example was followed by the Apostles. The early Christian religion was not only opposed by the pagan priests, but also by the philosophers, “who found no advantage in a religion that preaches humility” (*Sur la Réponse qui a été faite à son Discours*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, III, pp. 44–45).

The allusion to the Christian apologists inspires Rousseau to write a long *remarque*, which is of particular interest in understanding his attitude towards ancient thought. He declares that he fully shares the criticisms which Justin and Tertullian had aimed at the Greek philosophers, and points out that “the exposition of the dangerous mottos and impious dogmas of the different sects would in effect be a feature which would greatly dishonour philosophy”. In this context, Rousseau quotes a passage from Diogenes Laertius on Aristippus, but his attention focuses



above all on the “inner doctrine”, that is to say on the distinction between public teaching, which is respectful of religion, and esoteric teaching, which is inspired by atheism. Born in China alongside philosophy itself, this doctrine was used by Pythagoras and became widespread in Greece and Rome. Rousseau hopes that “some educated and honest man” will reconstruct its history, which “would be a terrific blow to ancient and modern philosophy”: this is the project of a ‘special’ history of philosophy, which would have a de-mystifying and anti-philosophical function. “But”, he observes, “philosophy will always challenge reason, truth, and time itself; for its source resides in human pride, which is stronger than all these things” (*Oeuvres complètes*, III, p. 46; as for the sources used here, see pp. 1262–1263).

In light of these judgements it is not surprising that Rousseau has a negative opinion of the apologists’ interest in mythology and pagan culture, which ended up by corrupting the original simplicity of Christianity and favouring the emergence of heresies. In particular, he denounces the “introduction of ancient philosophy into Christian doctrine”, so that “first Plato and then Aristotle were almost placed next to Jesus Christ on the altar”, and he observes that the Church tried repeatedly to oppose such abuses, but in vain. According to one of Rousseau’s typical paradoxes, it was precisely in the darkest century that a certain improvement became visible, because the ignorance in which the clergy had been immersed before the year 1000 allowed the Church to experience “more tranquillity than ever in the past”. Of course, the *renaissance des Lettres* meant a revival of divisions and quarrels, and hence persecutions. “Today”, Rousseau writes, concluding this brief historical survey, “the sciences are flourishing, literature and the arts shine among us; but has religion derived any benefit from this? Let us put this question to the crowd of philosophers who boast they have derived none. Our libraries are stacked with books of theology, and the casuists are swarming among us. In other ages we had saints instead of casuists. Science expands and faith is reduced to nothing” (*Oeuvres complètes*, III, pp. 47–48).

The historiographical theories presented here are certainly not new. They echo that anti-intellectual tendency alive above all in the Protestant tradition, which was itself reminiscent of the heated anti-pagan and anti-philosophical debate initiated by certain ecclesiastical writers of the early centuries (for a comparison with the philosophical and religious historiography of German pietism, see for example *Models*, II, pp. 323–331). But in the bewildering historical and cultural perspective that was being elaborated by a man who had hitherto been considered a *philosophe*, the revival of these themes had a weight quite different from the apologetics of the *dévots*. The ideology of progress – the “torch” that lights the historical development of the human mind – is defeated in the final stages with arguments taken from an unusual cultural amalgam. The history of philosophy is only valid as an example of radical negativity. The young *Émile* is not given Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of the philosophers* to read – which Diderot was to suggest to studious youth in his *Plan d’une Université Russe* – but Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*. And in book IV [853] of *Émile*, with reference to the reading of the great ancient historians, Rousseau observes: “You must be able to read facts clearly before you begin to study maxims. Philosophy in the form of maxims is only fit for the experienced. Youth should never

generalize anything; all its instruction should be in particular rules” (on line English transl. by B. Foxley and G. Roosvelet: [www.ilt.columbia.edu/pedagogies/rousseau/index.html](http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/pedagogies/rousseau/index.html); cf. Rousseau, *Oeuvres complètes*, IV, p. 529; D. Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris, 1875–1877, III, p. 480).

(d) *The divorce between erudition and esprit systématique*

Besides the tendency to interweave the history of philosophy with the *histoire de l'esprit humain* which was typical of French culture but also manifested itself significantly in England and Germany, let us point out another general tendency which originates in the application of the Cartesian method to Locke's epistemological and psychological theories. What emerged from this work of rigorous systemization, which was mainly carried out by Condillac, was the speculative horizon common to the French authors of this period, and this background affected the interpretation and practise of the history of philosophy in many ways. In the first place, it provided a speculative basis from which to take criteria for judging the ancient and modern philosophers, who were assessed according to sensistic epistemology; but it also influenced the structure of historiographical reasoning, which tended to reduce philosophies to their “principles”, and hence to classify different “systems”. The aggregation of information and opinions was thus given an order, of a more extrinsic kind (such as Savérien's “Système figuré des philosophes”: see below, Sect. 2.2.3.) or a doctrinal kind, according to a method which was not only used by Enlightenment authors but also by religious apologists. *Abbé* Pluquet, for example, reduced all deterministic theories to two fundamental systems, Spinozistic monism and the pluralism of substances, while *Abbé* Pelvert, for his part, compiled a detailed table of the correspondences between the mistakes made by the ancient and the modern philosophers, and ordered all the opinions of the ancients with regard to the soul into two clearly distinct groups, placing particular emphasis on the speculative contradictions rather than on the historical circumstances (see below, Chap. 3). On the other hand, in chapter VI of his *Métaphysique de Newton* (1740), Voltaire declared that “up to now there have been four opinions concerning the formation of ideas”: the first and most ancient is that which attributes matter with the ability to think; the second, which is the most widespread, “conceives of soul and body as two realities with nothing in common, but nevertheless holds that God created them so that they could affect each other”; the third opinion is “Descartes' system of occasional causes, taken even further by Malebranche”; and finally, “the fourth system is Leibniz's pre-established harmony” (*La Métaphysique de Newton, ou Parallèle des sentiments de Newton et de Leibnitz*, Amsterdam, 1740, pp. 39–43).

This tendency to classification found its most important application in Condillac who, in his *Traité des systèmes*, outlined a true typology of “systems” on epistemological bases, in which all the philosophies handed down by history found their proper place. From this point of view, Degérando's *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie* can be seen as part of an uninterrupted continuation of the French production of the second half of the eighteenth century, which develops the same epistemological premises, while Condorcet's *Esquisse* represents the sublimation of the history of civilisation and thought into a general theory of human history.

On a speculative level, therefore, the “arc described by the *histoire critique* in France” (as Garin defined it in *Dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo*, p. 274) originates in the positions of Bayle, with their interweave of scepticism and Cartesianism, and, passing through Deslandes' tenuous eclecticism, d'Argens' *philosophie du bon sens*, and Condillac's more rigorous sensism, was to reach Degérando's “history of systems” in the age of the *idéologues*.

This development is not as linear as might appear at first sight, however. In reality, the *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie* was not exclusively a ‘French’ product, but was the result of the decisive grafting of German historiography of philosophy (which Degérando had direct knowledge of) onto the epistemological and psychological themes that the *idéologues* had inherited from Condillac's sensism. The quality of Degérando's work represented a definite improvement with respect to previous production, from which he deliberately kept a critical distance. On a historiographical level, Degérando is closer to Cousin than to Condillac, and for this reason his *Histoire comparée* will be analysed in the following volume. Indeed, Cousin himself was to observe that “the philosophy of sensation, which belongs to England and France, has not produced a true history of philosophy in either of these countries”; and after strongly criticizing Condillac and Diderot's historiographical works, he credited Germany, and more precisely Tiedemann, with the realization of a general history of philosophy under the inspiration of empiricism: “It was thus necessary for the system of sensation to move on to a country where the habit and the taste for erudition enabled it to become a history of philosophy; it was necessary for it to move on to the country of Brucker” (Cousin, p. 322; on Tiedemann's speculative position, see below, Sect. 9.5.3.).

Cousin's judgement is obviously conditioned by his theoretical position, which led him to deny that the works produced by the Enlightenment possessed the characteristics of a ‘true’ history of philosophy. But his reference to the “pleasure of erudition” deserves to be understood and analysed in depth, in light of the relationship between “metaphysics” (understood as the “analysis of ideas”), ‘philosophical’ history, and the ‘erudite’ history of philosophy. Indeed, French writers of the second half of the eighteenth century had not failed to relate the history of the human mind to an epistemological and psychological investigation of the faculties of man. As noted above, D'Alembert distinguished between the “metaphysical order of the operations of the mind” (which corresponded to Locke's “history of the soul”, as Voltaire pointed out) and the “historical order of the progress of the mind”; and, according to Turgot, the varying historical development of nations did not contrast with the identical character of the human faculties through the centuries. Condillac included both the “analysis of the faculties of the soul” and the “order of the progress of the human mind” in the *histoire de l'esprit humain*, while at the beginning of his *Esquisse*, Condorcet established a specific connection between the development of the individual faculties and the development of society as a whole.

However, these two levels were not firmly balanced: individual psychologism, reinforced by its more rigorous structure, risked prevailing over social and cultural historicism, thus allowing the emergence of that anti-historical prejudice, of Cartesian origin, which was latent in the ‘French’ version of empiricism. The fixed

and unchanging nature of the human mind and the answers it can offer became predominant, with the same effectiveness as a theoretical model, compared to the varying philosophical positions which have expressed themselves historically. Thus in Condillac, historical enquiry strictly speaking comes ‘after’ “metaphysical” analysis – not only chronologically – and is ultimately intended to serve the latter. Batteux, for his part, developed Condillac’s positions with Cartesian clarity and observed that there is a “philosophy of all ages” and there are “philosophers of all ages”; the study of ancient philosophy is valid in particular because “it provides the measure of the human mind, making it look always more or less the same, despite the differences of place, time, and the tools available”. This attitude of fixity tended to privilege the ‘natural history of human knowledge’ rather than the ‘history of the contents of knowledge’ (that is to say, the synchronic rather than the diachronic dimension) and threatened to empty the historical progress of thought of all intrinsic value, reducing it to a succession of historical and ideal positions: a sort of gallery of the many mistakes and few truths which serve to confirm the epistemological premises.

Echoes of Descartes or Malebranche’s declared lack of interest in the philosophies of the past can be noted, for example, in marquis d’Argens (see below, Sect. 2.1.3.) or La Mettrie, who at the beginning of his *Histoire naturelle de l’âme* (1745) warns that “neither Aristotle, nor Plato, nor Descartes, nor Malebranche will teach you what your soul is”, and then, resting on his materialistic principles, declares that in order to know the qualities of the soul “the most certain guide is that of the senses. These are my philosophers”. But subsequently (Ch. VI) even La Mettrie calls upon history and observes that “the philosophers of all ages” have attributed matter with the “faculty of perceiving”, while in his later *Discours préliminaire* (1751) he recognizes that the mistakes made by philosophers can be made use of and therefore justifies the study of them: “Just as Descartes’ falsest hypotheses are considered to be happy mistakes because they allowed us to discern and discover many truths which would still be unknown without these hypotheses, so the worst-founded systems of morals or metaphysics are not as a result devoid of use, provided that they are well-reasoned and that a long concatenation of admirably deduced consequences, albeit derived from false and chimerical principles such as those of Leibniz and Wolff, provides a trained intellect with the ability, later on, to embrace a greater number of objects. Indeed, what will be the result of this? Better and longer sight, a better telescope and, so to say, new eyes, which perhaps will not tarry in offering important services” (J. Offray de La Mettrie, *Oeuvres philosophiques*, Berlin, 1774 [repr. Hildesheim and New York, 1970, 1988<sup>2</sup>], I, pp. 40–41, 53–54 and 66).

This ambivalent attitude towards the past ages of philosophy, and hence towards the writing of the history of philosophy, is typical of the mentality of the *philosophes*. Voltaire himself, in one of the *Questions sur l’Encyclopédie* devoted to Xenophanes, developed some reflections which, if understood literally, would lead to a consideration of the study of ancient philosophy as useless and meaningless. Referring to the article *Xénophanes* in the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 123), which Bayle used for his “devil’s eulogy”,

Voltaire ignores the many philosophical questions contained in it and laughs at the ancient philosophers in the name of a scientific and technological knowledge which is seen as useful to mankind and constantly turned towards new conquests: “In the end, are Xenophanes’ reveries of any importance to us? What more will we know if we learn that he considered the Earth to be an infinite, immobile being, which is made up of countless little corpuscles, little monads with the power of movement, and little organic molecules; that, for the rest, his thought was more or less the same as that of Spinoza later; and that he contradicted himself more than once, as the ancient philosophers always did?”. Criticism is then aimed at Anaximenes and Thales, Pherecydes and Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Ocellus Lucanus, Empedocles, and the “divine Plato”, whose “new republic” is the target of several sarcastic remarks, as is Descartes and his physical theories. “O philosophers”, continues Voltaire, “the well-assessed physical experiments, the arts and crafts: these are true philosophy!”. The skilled miller, the clever weaver or clockmaker, “the investigator into natural history”: these are the true philosophers. “The experiments by abbé Nollet”, concludes Voltaire referring here to a famous scientist of his time, “teach us alone much more than all the books of Antiquity” (*Complete Works of Voltaire*, Vol. XLIII, N. Cronk and Chr. Mervaud eds., Oxford, 2013, pp. 501–504).

In this context, the space conceded to a historiography of philosophy founded on the *goût de l’érudition* as well as on a speculative basis appears to be rather limited. Confined to its institutional place (the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*), erudite research enjoyed little favour among the *philosophes*, whose prevailing concern was the work of propaganda and populization. Indeed the “history of the human mind”, as a typically ‘philosophical’ operation, also rejected all erudite intent in principle, on the grounds that it was sterile and, moreover, contrary to good taste. “Malheur aux détails!”, proclaimed Voltaire in presenting *Le siècle de Louis XIV*, “C’est une vermine qui tue les grands ouvrages”; and after making it clear that he intended to limit himself to “describing the geniuses” who excelled in the various sciences and arts, ironically mentions Gassendi, who, although not a “genius”, was certainly not a secondary figure in the history of seventeenth-century thought (“God preserve me from devoting three hundred pages to the history of Gassendi! Life is too short and time too precious to say useless things”: *The Works of Voltaire*, transl. W.F. Fleming, vol. XII, pp. 5–7; here he is probably referring to the voluminous biography of Gassendi by the Oratorian Joseph Bougerel, published in Paris in 1737).

Batteux himself, although a member of the *Académie des Inscriptions*, took sides against “mean and laborious erudition” and the “long, arid discussions” concerning old books, to which he contrasted “the direct study of nature” (see below, Sect. 2.3.3.). The meticulous bio-bibliographical investigations which had been enthusiastically carried out by seventeenth-century scholars and even Brucker had taken into consideration when drawing up his *historia personarum* of philosophers, are considered to be absolutely useless even by a valid historiographer like Montucla. In the ‘Préface’ to his famous *Histoire des mathématiques*, he observes that “the history of a science, I admit, would be of little use if it were made to consist in the history of those who cultivated this science and in listing their works, and, following the

example of certain authors, if one delighted in flaunting sterile erudition concerning facts of little interest, such as the exact date and place of birth or death of a scientist. At most, this would arouse the approval of those for whom the discovery of the title of a rare book or of a curious and unknown anecdote is worthier than the discovery of a truth” (J.-E. Montucla, *Histoire des mathématiques*, Paris, 1758, I, pp. IV–V).

Even more indicative is the testimony of the great Buffon, who in his introduction to his *Histoire naturelle* criticized the excessive erudition displayed by the sixteenth-century naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandi, noting that this is “a defect or an excess present in almost all books written one or two hundred years ago and that even today characterizes the learned men of Germany; they deliberately inflate their works with quantities of useless erudition, so that the theme analysed is flooded by a mass of extraneous subjects, on which they reason with such self-satisfaction and on which they linger with so little respect for the reader that they seem to have forgotten what they intended to say and only tell you what others said”. But Buffon does not limit himself to these criticisms, which were facile and predictable in the *siècle philosophique*. Showing a considerable awareness of the methodological problems, he observes in the following pages that this defect has already been eliminated thanks in part to a clearer, more orderly literary style, which, together with the *esprit de recherche*, has meant that today “we prefer a small well-reasoned work to a big scholarly volume”. However, let us take care not to commit the opposite mistake, that is to say, the abuse of reason before facts and experience, which would damage both natural history and – using a particularly interesting parallel – civil history itself: “the only thing to fear is that, by coming to despise erudition, we come to imagine that the *esprit* is able to stand in for everything, and that science is nothing but an empty word. Nevertheless, reasonable people will always be aware that the only true science is the knowledge of facts, that the *esprit* cannot replace it, and that facts are in the sciences what experience is in civil life. We could therefore divide all the sciences into two main classes which will contain all that which is appropriate to man: the first is Civil History and the second Natural History, which are both based on facts the knowledge of which is often important and always pleasurable” (G.-L. de Buffon, *Histoire naturelle générale et particulière*, I, Paris, 1749, pp. 26 and 28–29; as regards the emphasis placed by Batteux on ‘facts’, see below, Sect. 2.3.3.).

The need for both erudition and philosophy to be present in historiography was also felt by those who concerned themselves with the history of philosophy. To illuminate the distant territory of ancient philosophy – observed a reviewer of d’Argens translation of Ocellus Lucanus – “the philosophical spirit must be united with sound literature [...]; but seldom do men appear who possess both these qualities which seem almost to exclude each other” (JE, 1762, I/1, p. 5; see below, Sect. 2.1.5.). This idea, supported by references to materialistic determinism, was also shared by Naigeon, for whom “the philosopher and the scholar are [...] two sorts of automatons assembled to perform a certain series of different motions, two machines necessarily determined and organised in such a way that one has great spirit and discernment and many ideas [...] and the other holds in its memory, for example, almost all the words of a dead language and their roots so that they know

in what sense each of these words is used in this or that ancient author, as well as in the original work or the work of some old commentator in whom this particular expression appears; finally, if each of us – which is undeniable – is necessarily what he is, if one is destined and marked by nature to be Saumaise [a famous seventeenth-century erudite], and the other to be Hobbes or Newton, Voltaire or the inventor of the loom for knitting socks, then we cannot ever hope to see a good critical history of ancient philosophy, unless one day someone appears who unites extensive knowledge in many sciences and a clear and profound mind, immense and well-assimilated erudition, a reasoned study of the ancient languages, a taste perfected by reading and comparing the great models, and a talent for pleasantly illustrating the different objects he intends to offer to the imagination or to the reason of his readers” (Naigeon, *Philos. anc. et mod.*, I, pp. V–VI; see also p. XII, where the author criticizes those learned historians of philosophy who, “almost exclusively concerned with compiling big indistinct amounts of facts, appear to leave it to the philosopher to apply them, discover the power of the mutual dependence that links them, indicate these relationships which are frequently difficult to grasp [ . . . ], and then elevate the truths resulting from this sort of analysis to the greatest universality”).

Naigeon seems here to be outlining the portrait of the ideal historian of philosophy: a man of learning, a *philosophe*, and at the same time a man of letters. In reality, he limits himself to pointing out the opposition between erudite and philosophical work and to dreaming of their possible convergence, for which he offers no theoretical indication, however, but only the hope that sooner or later the great ‘genius’ will appear. This position does not go beyond a formulation of generic requirements and does not seem to have had any effect on the historiographical work of Naigeon himself. The theoretical and methodological limitations of Enlightenment historiography are thus clear: from the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* in which speculative criticism was accompanied by historical and philological rigour, during the eighteenth century, the “critical” history of philosophy lost the comprehensive – and complex – meaning of Bayle’s work and preferred to turn to the *esprit philosophique* rather than to the less lucid tool of meticulous historical and erudite research. Indeed, even the *histoire de l’esprit humain*, supported by a general interpretation of history, marks a clear break from that “passion for the individual fact” which characterized Bayle’s mental and cultural attitude and was hostile to all forms of overall explanation (cf. Braun, p. 166; *Models*, II, pp. 127–128). From this point of view, the “parabola” of the *histoire critique* coincided with the ‘betrayal’ of the author who had determined its birth and whom the century of the *lumières* considered its master and forerunner.

#### (e) *Collateral historiographical works*

In order to complete the overview of the relationship between the historiography of philosophy and the *esprit des lumières*, besides those authors who are examined in this chapter, it is necessary to mention the collateral works produced: in addition to dictionaries and short surveys on the history of philosophy, these include more sectional enquiries restricted to ancient philosophy or general treatments concerning the history of the sciences, culture, or the *esprit humain*. We can begin this survey

with one of the most typical works of the French Enlightenment, which enjoyed much success and was burnt because of its virulent attacks on the clergy: the *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, which was published anonymously in Amsterdam in 1770 by the former Jesuit Guillaume-Thomas-François Raynal, and on which Diderot himself collaborated. This *Histoire*, which is the most important example of eighteenth-century anthropological and anti-colonial literature, might seem totally alien to the genre of the history of philosophy. But precisely at the end of the nineteenth and last book (in which the author gives an overall view of Europe and clearly defines “the influence which the new links with the New World has had upon the opinions, government, industry, arts, manners, and happiness of the Old”) there also appears an interesting profile of the history of philosophy, placed between the chapter on arts and letters and the chapter on morals (*A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies*, transl. J.O. Justamond, London, 1783, vol. VIII, pp. 2 and 333–346).

All the most typical theories of Enlightenment historiography are here: philosophy was the last to appear on the cultural scene, when the greatest maturity had been reached, that is to say, before the collapse of the republics of Greece and Rome; the most ancient philosophers, from Thales to Anaxagoras, “had laid the foundations of natural philosophy in the theories of the elements of matter; but the desire to form systems subsequently subverted these several principles” (p. 334); Plato devoted himself entirely to the study of the soul, neglecting the study of nature and mixing up philosophy and theology . . . The progress of human knowledge is traced back to the concomitant effects of many elements and to the dialectic between popular beliefs and the educational actions of the philosophers. “But we must not suppose that philosophers alone have discovered and imagined every thing”, observes Raynal regarding the development of modern philosophical and scientific thought, “it is the course of events which has given a certain tendency to the actions and thoughts of mankind. A complication of natural or moral causes, a gradual improvement in politics, along with the progress of study and the sciences, a combination of circumstances which it was as impossible to accelerate as to foresee, must have contributed to the revolution that has prevailed in the understandings of men. Among nations, as among individuals, the body and soul act and react alternately upon each other. Popular opinions infect even philosophers, and philosophers are guides to the people”. In this way, the existence of the Antipodes about which Galileo speculated was demonstrated in practice by the voyages of Sir Francis Drake, while the conviction that Catholicism is a universal religion was denied by the accounts given by merchants and travellers to foreign lands. In these ways, “philosophy extended the empire of human knowledge, by the discovery of the errors of superstition, and the truths of nature” (pp. 341–342).

Towards the end of this historical summary, indeed, we find a eulogy to ‘philosophy’ understood in the sense the encyclopaedists knew: “after so many advantages it has procured mankind, [philosophy] ought to be considered a divinity on earth. It is she who unites, enlightens, aids, and comforts mankind. She bestows every thing upon them, without exacting any worship in return. She requires of them,



not the sacrifice of their passions, but a reasonable, useful, and moderate exercise of all their faculties. Daughter of nature, dispenser of her gifts, interpreter of her rights, she consecrates her intelligence and her labour to the use of man. She renders him better, that he may be happier. She detests only tyranny and imposture, because they oppress mankind. She does not desire to rule, but she exacts of such as govern, to consider public happiness as the only source of their enjoyment. She avoids contests, and the name of sects, but she tolerates them all” (pp. 343–344).

Praise of “philosophical boldness”, albeit in more restrained tones, can also be found at the end of Pierre-Charles Lévesque’s *L’homme pensant, ou Essai sur l’histoire de l’esprit humain* (Amsterdam, 1779), where we can also hear some echoes of Voltaire, Turgot, and Condillac. After examining the “causes of the early developments of the human mind” (pp. 1–148), in the second part of his work (pp. 149–344) Lévesque intends “to follow the advances of the mind and its errors, which are the consequences (*suites*) of these very advances and which must be destroyed by new advances” (p. 148). A considerable part of this typical history of the human mind is devoted to the ancients and their philosophy: civilisation and philosophy, and philosophy’s first errors, developed in India and then in Egypt, many of whose doctrines were plagiarised by the Greeks. Greek thought is judged negatively because of its vain metaphysical research (“intellectual novels”) and its lack of social utility. In particular, Lévesque is very critical not only of Plato, but also of Socrates: the alleged “hero of ancient philosophy” who is accused of pride and superstition, and his “widely celebrated method”, is made to consist of nothing but posing “infantile questions” (pp. 149–150, 207, 242–244, 267–268, and 301; but see also, by the same author, *Considérations sur les obstacles que les anciens philosophes ont apporté aux progrès de la saine philosophie*, in *Mémoires de l’Institut national des sciences et des arts, pour l’an IV de la République. Sciences morales et politiques*, I, Paris, Thermidor an VI, pp. 247–284; in addition, Lévesque published for the very small ‘Collection des moralistes anciens’ a series of 17 profiles of ancient philosophers: *Vies et apophthegmes des philosophes grecs*, Paris, l’an III, 1795, 192 pages in vigesimo-quarto size).

Shorter but highly significant are the references to the history of philosophy in another work imbued with the spirit of the *lumières*: *De la Félicité publique, ou Considérations sur le sort des hommes dans les différentes époques de l’histoire* (Amsterdam, 1772, 2 Vols) by marquis Jean-François de Chastellux. In this general history of humanity, written from the point of view of the “happiness of peoples”, the whole of Greek society, and not only its philosophers, is under accusation. In examining “the progress made by philosophy and politics among the Greeks”, the author draws a distinction of which Condorcet (see below, Sect. 2.5.3.) was undoubtedly aware when he presented his ‘social’ view of philosophy: “As for philosophy, I formulate my judgement in two different ways: I examine it as such and I observe how it affects peoples. It is known that before Socrates philosophy had completely neglected morals, exclusively feeding on vain systems of cosmology and theogony; and that, even when the taste cultivated in the schools was oriented towards morals, this science remained deeply affected by the dominant spirit and never managed to rest on a stable basis. However”, insists the author, moving to

the other point of view, “if we judge causes by their effects, how can we define as ‘philosophical’ a people which give themselves over to the most extravagant superstitions; a people cruel towards its enemies, and even more cruel to those whom fate had placed under it; finally, a people that, disregarding the benefits of nature and the way to profit from them, seeks all its happiness in glory and all its glory in war? No, if wisdom is the art of living happy, and if philosophy really is love of wisdom, as its name alone leads us to understand, then the Greeks were never philosophers” (I, pp. 32–33).

In this perspective, the Socratic myth created by the great *maîtres à penser* (Voltaire, Diderot, and Rousseau) is literally turned upside down and the ‘moral turning point’ brought about by the Athenian philosopher in the development of thought is judged to be a negative event and is quoted with irony (“Socrates boasted he had made philosophy descend from heaven to earth. We have to recognize that this was not a happy journey. I think that philosophy would have been much more useful not only in heaven, where it could have discovered the planetary system, but also on the surface of the earth where, by means of repeated observations, it would have certainly learnt some physical truths, which would have been much more useful to man than the whole of Plato’s morals”: I, p. 32 note). The idea underlying these critical points is that of the historical and cultural development of humanity through a “slow and gradual advance”, divided into three great phases, which lend themselves to interesting parallels with Comte’s law of the three stages: “Pleasant arts, like painting, sculpture, architecture; frivolous talents, like poetry and music, are present in its infancy; a taste for discussion comes later on and makes subtlety, controversy, and logomachy prevail, until, when all opinions become equally false and misleading, reason stops wavering (*flotter*) in uncertainty, and throws itself on the side of doubt and experience: this, little by little, forms the true and, so to speak, ultimate philosophy” (I, pp. 31–32; on the judgement on Greek philosophy, see also II, pp. 61 and 79).

Moving on to more restricted forms of treatment, let us mention the outline of the history of moral and political philosophy from Antiquity to the contemporary age which is contained in the *Discours préliminaire. De l’influence de la philosophie sur les mœurs et la législation* that precedes the *Dictionnaire universel des sciences morale, économique, politique et diplomatique, ou Bibliothèque de l’homme d’État et du citoyen* (London, 1777–1783, I, pp. I–LIII). It was published by Jean-Baptiste-René Robinet, who edited the supplements to the *Encyclopédie* and also produced the *Fragments sur le sort de la philosophie chez les Romains*, which appeared in the *Premier recueil philosophique et littéraire de la Société typographique de Bouillon* (Bouillon and Paris, 1769). This outline mentions Deslandes and Savérien’s historiographical works. In particular, let us note the highly positive assessment of Stoic morals, in contrast to the more generally critical judgement, which had been confirmed, for example, by La Mettrie in his *Anti-Sénèque* (*Dictionnaire universel*, I, pp. XI–XII). As for the entries in the dictionary on the history of philosophy, they are limited to those thinkers who dealt with ethical, political, and legal themes: Abbadie, Althusius, Anacarsis, Antisthenes, Apollonius of Tyana, Aristotle, Francis Bacon . . .

Those who did not want to turn to the lengthy treatments of Diderot's *Encyclopédie* could find concise but complete biographical information on the ancient and modern philosophers in the *Dictionnaire historique portatif* by abbé Jean-Baptiste Ladvocat (Paris, 1752, published several times and soon translated into Italian). By contrast, the historical aspect is almost totally absent from the *Dictionnaire philosophique, ou Introduction à la connaissance de l'homme* (London, 1751) by Didier-Pierre Chicaneau de Neuville (there is a doxographical survey of the cosmologies elaborated by the Stoics, the Epicureans, Pythagoras, Spinoza, and the Christian religion in the entry 'Univers'). The category of the dictionary also includes the *Dictionnaire des athées, anciens et modernes* (Paris, an VIII), compiled by the materialist Pierre-Sylvain Maréchal with the collaboration of Lalande, whose *Discours préliminaire* takes up Rousseau's theme of the state of nature, developing it from an atheistic point of view, and defends atheism against the accusation of having corrupted the world's morality. This work, intended for the purposes of propaganda, presents in alphabetical order, from Abelard to Zoroaster, a long series of declared atheists or authors who, because of something they affirmed, would be placed in the category of Spinozism or atheism. According to this criterion, which is as broad as it is debatable, among the group of "atheists" we also find St Augustine and Cardinal Bellarmine, Berkeley, Descartes, Malebranche and Pascal, Pythagoras and Plato, the followers of Duns Scotus, and St Thomas Aquinas . . .

The range of studies concerning ancient philosophy is very varied, but the populist aspect prevails over historical and philological research. A new French translation of Diogenes Laertius (after those made by François de Fougerolles and Gilles Boileau, published in 1601 and 1668) was published in Amsterdam and in Paris in 1758, edited by Jacques-Georges Chauffepié. The *Discours préliminaire*, written by Chauffepié, emphasises the ethical slant that characterized the lives and doctrines of the ancient philosophers: "Since improving men is as important as making them less ignorant, it is worthwhile assembling all the features of the most conspicuous moral virtues. Why are we so concerned to preserve the history of men's thoughts, while we disregard the history of their acts? Is not the latter the most useful of all? . . ." (*Les Vies des plus illustres philosophes de l'antiquité, avec leurs dogmes, leurs systèmes, leur morale, et leurs sentences les plus remarquables, traduites du grec de Diogène Laërce, auxquelles on a ajouté la Vie de l'Auteur, celles d'Epictète, de Confucius, et leur morale, et un Abrégé historique de la vie des Femmes Philosophes* [taken from *Ménage*: cf. *Models*, II, pp. 72–78], Amsterdam, 1758, I, p. VIII). Besides this translation, let us mention the translation of Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* (Paris, 1776–1777) by abbé Joseph Donzé de Verteuil, who added a commentary on ancient philosophy. Moreover, some collections of ancient works were translated into French, such as the *Bibliothèque des anciens philosophes, contenant la vie de Pythagore, ses Symboles, la vie d'Hiéroclès et ses Vers dorés, les oeuvres de Platon* (Paris, 1771) and *L'esprit des anciens philosophes, ou recueil choisi des divers ouvrages de morale, de législation, de politique et d'économie civile et domestique, publiés par Lycurge, Solon, Socrate, Pythagore, Platon, Epictète, Marc-Aurèle, et les autres philosophes de l'antiquité* (Paris, l'an III de la République [1795], 5 Vols). The value of these works is modest, and

one reviewer even defined them as mere “mercantile operations”, very superficial in their evaluation of ancient thought (ME, 1795, iv, pp. 109–112, where the author vigorously objects to the opinion formulated by the editor of the *Esprit des anciens philosophes* according to which Greek philosophers “were in general mere charlatans”).

We have already mentioned the works on ancient thought written by Lévêque, who subsequently also published five volumes of *Études de l'histoire ancienne et de celle de la Grèce* (Paris, 1811). Louis Cousin-Despréaux also dealt with Greek philosophy in the context of his *Histoire générale et particulière de la Grèce, contenant l'origine, le progrès et la décadence des lois, des sciences, des arts, des lettres, de la philosophie* (Rouen-Paris, 1780–1789, 16 Vols). The same years saw the publication of the famous *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce, dans le milieu du quatrième siècle avant l'ère vulgaire* (Paris, 1788, 4 Vols) by Jean-Jacques Barthélemy (who, by imagining the journey of a young Scythian to Greece, allows the reader to experience the different aspects of Hellenic civilisation, including the philosophical), and the *Recherches philosophiques sur les Grecs* (Berlin, 1788, 2 Vols) by the Dutch scholar Cornelius de Pauw, who also contributed to the supplements of the *Encyclopédie*.

De Pauw's work is a history of society and culture in Athens and Sparta; it examines the philosophers in several parts and devotes more room to *réflexions* rather than to a systematic exposition. Interesting, for example, is the relationship between the five major philosophical sects and the different temperaments of man, where adherence to a sect often appears to be conditioned by “a certain disposition of the organs”. “It is not surprising”, observes de Pauw, taking up the Hippocratic theory of humours in his own way, “that those who were born with considerable strength of mind and nerves had a preference for Stoicism, whereas those mortals whom nature had endowed with more flexible fibres and a more pronounced sensibility should seek shelter under the myrtles of Epicurus [...]. Those whose temperament was somewhere between these two extremes either chose the Lyceum or the Academy: robust minds took sides with Aristotle, whereas those endowed only with a bright intelligence (*génie*), or who thought they had one, swelled the multitude of the Platonists. As to those individuals whose disposition was so melancholic and whose character so indomitable that they refused to submit to the yoke of any law or to the burden of any system, they all ran into the arms of the Cynics” (*Recherches philosophiques*, II, pp. 145–147).

The theme of happiness, approached however from a more traditional perspective, reappears in *Histoire critique des opinions des anciens et des systèmes des philosophes sur le bonheur* (Paris, 1778) by Guillaume Dubois de Rochefort, who translated Homer and Sophocles, and confuted d'Holbach in his *Pensées diverses contre le système des matérialistes* (Paris, 1771). This *Histoire critique* is divided into five books, the first of which presents the opinions of the ancient historians and poets, whereas the other four books are devoted to the philosophers, from Thales to Seneca and Marcus Aurelius (the moral doctrines elaborated by the Greek philosophers had also been briefly examined by Le Pileur d'Apligny in his *Essais historiques sur la morale des anciens et des modernes* (Paris, 1772), pp. 29–53).

Rocheport, who was a member of the *Académie des inscriptions*, also published the ‘Observations sur l’ouvrage de Théophraste, intitulé *Caractères moraux*’, HA Mém., XLVI (1780–1784), pp. 174–182. At this point, we should also remember the large collection of specialized studies produced by the *Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres*, which Degérando had already brought to the public’s attention. “We have necessarily to admit that France still lacks a true history of philosophy”, he added after a long critical note on Condillac’s historiographical work, “but we should at least do justice to the *Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres* because, since its very foundation, it has produced or inspired a series of important works relating to the different sections of this history and to the materials it is composed of” (Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, p. 183, which also contains a concise list of authors and subjects; for a more complete table of contents, see *Tableau général, raisonné et méthodique des ouvrages contenus dans le recueil des Mémoires de l’Académie des Inscriptions*, Paris, 1791, pp. 41–65; for the role of this academy, cf. Bertrand, *La fin du classicisme*, pp. 46–70).

Among these studies of very limited scope, besides Batteux’s *mémoires* which will be analysed in more detail later on, it is worth noting some lengthier contributions, such as the memoir written by abbé Paul Foucher on the “systems of Pythagoras, Plato, the Gnostics, and the other forerunners of Mani”, and the five consecutive memoirs by abbé Étienne Mignot on the ancient philosophers of India, which also include a parallel with the doctrines of the Greek philosophers (HA Mém., XXIX (1758–1760), pp. 202–228; XXXI (1761–1763), pp. 81–338). Among the works devoted to individual philosophers, we will mention those by abbé Jean-Jacques Garnier on Socrates and Plato: the *Caractère de la philosophie socratique; De l’usage que Platon a fait des fables; Dissertation sur le Cratyle de Platon*; and the *Observations sur le parallèle d’Homère et de Platon* (HA Mém., XXXII (1761–1763), pp. 137–163, 164–189, 190–211; HA, XLII (1776–1779), pp. 11–26).

There were also contributions of a more general nature, such as the *Mémoire sur les sectes philosophiques* by Jean-Baptiste Souchay (HA Mém., XIV (1738–1740), pp. 1–15), for example, which is based on seventeenth-century historiography (Jonsius, Stanley, and Rapin), and above all the *Observations générales sur l’étude de la philosophie ancienne* by Nicolas Fréret (HA Mém., XVIII (1744–1746), pp. 97–114), where the author takes a stand against the contempt shown towards the ancient philosophers by the modern experts in the exact and natural sciences. Shifting the *querelle des anciens et des modernes* strictly into the domain of the history of philosophy, Fréret claims that it was the ancients who discovered the “methodical elements” and the “fundamental principles of the sciences”, which the moderns took as their starting point for extending their knowledge. The study of ancient philosophical opinions – understood here in the sense of natural philosophy – “would at least teach us the history of the human mind, which for the philosophers is the most instructive and at the same time the most pleasant history”. Conducted by qualified scientist, this study might also bring about important discoveries, as in the case of the astronomer Halley, whose research into the phases of the moon was inspired by ancient authors (HA Mém., XVIII (1744–1746), pp. 98–99). The famous scholar and freethinker, Fréret, wrote several ‘memoirs’ on

themes concerning the history of philosophy, but produced no overall work, except the *Observations générales* quoted above. “No one had a better knowledge of ancient philosophy”, observed Bougainville, who succeeded him as secretary to the *Académie des Inscriptions*, “the new enlightened perspectives that emerged from his conversations repeatedly made us hope that he might concern himself with the history of philosophy. His friends urged him to undertake this task, but other works prevented him” (J.-P. de Bougainville, ‘Éloge de M. Fréret’, HA, XXIII (1749–1751), p. 329).

In the overview given here a special place is devoted to taken up by the general histories of science and culture, which are complementary to the general history of philosophy and partially overlap with it, converging on the common perspective of the history of the human mind. A typical product of this type of literature is, for example, the *Essais sur l’histoire des Belles-Lettres, des Sciences et des Arts* (Lyon, 1740–1744, 2 Vols; 1749, 4 Vols) by Félix Juvenel de Carleucas, who in his ‘Préface’ criticizes those who privilege the “history of nations and empires” and maintains the usefulness and dignity of “studying the human opinions historically” (I, pp. III–VI; a short outline of philosophy in general, from the origins to Descartes, is contained in vol. I, pp. 145–160, which is followed by some modest comments on the history of logic, morals, metaphysics, and physics, pp. 161–180).

“One of the most worthy spectacles to interest the philosophical eye is undoubtedly the development of the human mind and the different branches of its knowledge”. This statement – immediately supported by a reference to Bacon, the great tutelary deity – opens the ‘Préface’ to the work by Jean-Étienne Montucla quoted above, whose complete title reads as follows: *Histoire des mathématiques, dans laquelle on rend compte de leurs progrès depuis leur origine jusqu’à nos jours; où l’on expose le tableau et le développement des principales découvertes, les contestations qu’elles ont fait naître, et les principaux traits de la vie des mathématiciens les plus célèbres* (Paris, 1758), 2 Vols; *Nouvelle édition, considérablement augmentée et prolongée jusque vers l’époque actuelle* (Paris, an VII–an X [1799–1802]), 4 Vols, with additions by Jérôme de Lalande; reprint of this 2nd edition, with an ‘Avant-Propos’ by Ch. Naux (Paris, 1960; 1968<sup>2</sup>). The work is divided into four parts, according to historical and geographical criteria: the first goes from the earliest times to the fall of Constantinople and embraces the entire development of the sciences in the Greek world; the second concerns the Oriental peoples (the Arabs, Persians, Chinese, and Indians); the third comprises the Romans and the Western world up to the beginning of the seventeenth century; and the fourth period is the contemporary age, which is the object of extensive analysis.

Abbé Charles Bossut, on the other hand, adopted a strictly chronological criterion, analogous to that used in the historiography of philosophy, in the ‘Discours préliminaire’ to his *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des mathématiques* (I, Paris, 1789, pp. I–CXIV), which was part of the *Encyclopédie méthodique*. Bossut distinguishes four periods: from the origins to the destruction of the school of Alexandria; from the Arabs to the end of the fifteenth century; from the sixteenth century to the invention of calculus by Leibniz and Newton; and the eighteenth century up to the years 1782–1783. This historical profile was taken up again and later developed in

the *Essai sur l'histoire générale des mathématiques* (Paris, 1802, 2 Vols). Besides this work, we can also mention the *Abrégé chronologique pour servir à l'histoire de la physique jusqu'à nos jours* (Strasbourg, 1786–1789, 4 Vols) by Charles de Loys. This is a history of modern achievements in physics starting from 1589 (that is, from Galileo's discovery of the law of falling bodies) and is divided into nine "epochs". In the 'Avant-Propos' the author observes that "it is no longer fashionable" to trace the history of physics back to "fabulous times", but he nevertheless mentions some of the ancients who distinguished themselves in this field, in particular Roger Bacon, regarded as the progenitor of many scientific inventions (I, pp. I–V).

In the field of the history of astronomy, (in addition to the mediocre *Histoire générale et particulière de l'astronomie* by Pierre Estève, published in Paris in 1755) let us mention the monumental work by the astronomer Jean-Sylvain Bailly, who acted as president of the National Assembly and mayor of Paris during the Revolution, and was eventually sent to the guillotine. The work, consisting of five volumes, comprises a *Histoire de l'astronomie ancienne depuis son origine jusqu'à l'établissement de l'École d'Alexandrie* (Paris, 1775), a *Histoire de l'astronomie moderne* (1779–1782, 3 Vols), and a *Traité de l'astronomie indienne et orientale* (1787). Bailly also became famous for a theory he developed in his *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences et sur celle des peuples de l'Asie, adressées à M. de Voltaire* (London and Paris, 1777) and in the subsequent *Lettres sur l'Atlantide de Platon et sur l'ancienne histoire de l'Asie* (London and Paris, 1779), which were also mentioned by Ernesti in his bibliography on the origins of history and civilisation. In contrast to current opinion, which attributed the origin of civilisation to the Oriental peoples, Bailly maintained that the invention of the arts, philosophy, and the sciences was the work of a very ancient people who lived in the North of Asia, near the 50th parallel, and disappeared due to a catastrophe, leaving its culture – in particular its "sublime and wise philosophy" – as a legacy for the Southern nations, such as the Chaldeans and the Indians. As far as this "clever hypothesis" is concerned, La Harpe observed that it seemed to be inspired, at least in part, by N.A. Boulanger's *Antiquité dévoilée par ses usages* (Amsterdam, 1766), "a very erudite and obscure book, in which the author attempts to prove that in every people customs and religious ceremonies contain a memory of an ancient revolution which disrupted the globe" (La Harpe, *Lycée*, XIV, Paris, 1804, p. 303).

The theme of the rise of civilisation is also the subject of the work by Antoine-Yves Goguet (with the collaboration of Alexandre-Conrad Fugère), *De l'origine des loix, des arts et des sciences et de leurs progrès chez les anciens peuples* (Paris, 1758, 3 Vols). "The history of the laws, the arts, and the sciences", we read in the preface, "is, properly speaking, the history of the human mind". The intention is "to develop faithfully the origin and early progress" of this history, by referring above all to the "facts" instead of the inappropriate use of "conjecture" (while Montucla declares that, due to the lack of information on the earliest development of the sciences, he has reconstructed "an imaginary development which is probably not far from the truth": cf. Goguet, *Dell'origine delle leggi, delle arti e delle scienze* [...], Italian transl. (Venice, 1818), I, p. 111; Montucla, *Histoire des mathématiques*, I, p. IX). Goguet derives his periodization from sacred history and distinguishes three

epochs (I: from the Flood to the death of Jacob; II: up to the establishment of monarchy among the Hebrews; III: up to the return from Babylonian captivity). According to him the sciences originated in Asia and Egypt during the period immediately following the Flood.

Lastly, let us note the persistence of that genre of ‘universal history’ whose most outstanding representative had been Bossuet and which seemed to resist the attacks of the ‘new historiography’ of the *lumières*; indeed, in Napoleonic schools, the teaching of history followed not only Rollin’s *Histoire ancienne* but also Bossuet’s *Discours sur l’histoire universelle* (cf. Guerci, *Note sulla storiografia illuministica*, pp. 259–260; as regards Rollin, see *Models*, II, pp. 98–100). In the middle of the eighteenth century, a work by Jacques Hardion (a member of the *Académie Française*) was published under the hardly innovative title: *Histoire universelle sacrée et profane, composée par ordre de Mesdames de France* (Paris, 1754–1765, 18 Vols; the subsequent edition, 1756–1769, included two additional volumes on the *Histoire universelle du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle* written by Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet). Faithful to a venerable tradition, the work takes the creation of the world as its starting point and passes through the ancient philosophers: the seven Sages, the two Zoroasters, the events concerning Socrates... But it is in the sixth epoch (which goes from the beginning of the reign of Cyrus the Great to the Seleucids, the successors to Alexander the Great), within book IX, that the analysis of the philosophers begins to resemble an organic historical *abrégé* devoted to the culture of the Greeks. In about 50 duodecimo pages, subdivided into six chapters, the author presents the ancient philosophical schools up to the Sceptics (Hardion, *Histoire universelle*, 2nd edn, I, pp. 313–318; II, pp. 68–72, 179–180, 235, and 247–250; III, pp. 105–159). Limited space is given to the two major figures of Plato and Aristotle, while the treatment of the Cyrenaics, the Cynics, and the Stoics (chapter v) and Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Democritus, Epicurus, and the Sceptics (chapter vi) provides more detailed doctrinal references.

But the *esprit des lumières* did manage to permeate into the domain of traditional universal history thanks to Guillaume-Alexandre de Méhégan. Chevalier de Méhégan was the author, among other things, of a fictionalized biography of Zoroaster (1751), the *Considérations sur les révolutions des arts* (1755), and of a history of idolatry (on which see below, Chap. 3, *Introd.*, a), but he also wrote a *Tableau de l’histoire moderne, depuis la chute de l’Empire d’Occident, jusqu’à la paix de Westphalie, pour servir de suite à l’Histoire universelle de M. Bossuet, et d’introduction à l’Histoire moderne des Chinois, des Japonais etc. de M. l’Abbé de Marsy* (Paris, 1766; 1778<sup>2</sup>, 3 Vols). The chronological presentation of the main political events is divided into seven epochs and is accompanied by a series of *réflexions* relating to culture in every age. As far as philosophy in particular is concerned, in the ‘Préface’ the author declares that “through the course of events we will follow with the utmost precision the thread of human knowledge. In so far as the obscurity of the ages allow, we will show the remains of the sciences, when it is possible to discover them in the centuries of ignorance. We will see the moments of their revival during the happier ages. We will carefully indicate the degrees by which they came to the point where we see them at present” (ed.



1778, I, p. XXXVI). Indeed, the references to the history of philosophy, which only occasionally appear in the first six epochs, become more consistent in “divisions” II and III of the seventh epoch (covering the years 1556–1648) and they take up the usual themes of Enlightenment historiography: in contrast to the “phantom” of Peripatetic physics, sixteenth-century French thinkers – Pierre de la Ramée, Bodin, Charron, and Montaigne – are defined as “the Socrates of their time”, whereas Bacon, Descartes, and Galileo are praised for their contributions to the cause of reason and truth. Using an image borrowed from the history of idolatry, Méhégan specifically observes that “in France it was Descartes who earned the glory for smashing the altars where the absurd philosophy of the Schools had been worshipped for so many centuries” (III, pp. 205–208; 492–507).

## Bibliographical Note

From among the vast literature on the *lumières* in France, we quote here only the works useful for defining the historical and cultural framework or those more directly pertaining to the history of the historiography of philosophy. For more detailed information, we refer the reader to Cioranescu and the current bibliographies: R. Rancoeur, *Bibliographie de la littérature française du Moyen Âge à nos jours* (Paris, 1967–); *Bibliographie der französischen Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. O. Klapp (Frankfurt a.M., 1960–); moreover, see P.-M. Conlon, *Les siècles des Lumières. Bibliographie chronologique* (Geneva 1983–2009), 32 Vols; *Dictionnaire des imprimeurs, libraires et gens du livre à Paris (1701–1781)* (Geneva, 2007–).

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On Montucla: Dagen, pp. 61–66. On de Loys: JE, 1787, II/1, pp. 212–221; 1788, I/1, pp. 156–157.

On Bailly: JE, 1776, II, pp. 13–27, 237–252; 1777, IV, pp. 416–432; 1779, I, pp. 452–468; III, pp. 384–399; IV, pp. 36–48; MT, 1776, I, pp. 322–329; 1779, I, pp. 85–113; JS, July 1782, pp. 471–478; *Mercure*, June 1777, pp. 75–86; July 1779, pp. 202–217; J.-F. de La Harpe, 'Sur un ouvrage intitulé *Lettres sur l'origine des sciences* [...]', in *Lycée*, vol. XIV (Paris, 1804), pp. 300–304; Ernesti, p. 132.

On Goguet: Degérando<sup>1</sup>, I, p. 47; E. Lemay, 'Histoire de l'antiquité et découverte du nouveau monde chez deux auteurs du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle' [J.-F. Lafitau and A.-Y. Goguet], in *Transactions of the 4th Intern. Congress of the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1976), III, pp. 1313–1328; Dagen, pp. 508–509.

On Hardion: MT, May 1755, pp. 1272–1293; November 1756, pp. 2812–2826; January 1758, p. 381; July 1758, pp. 1586–1609; April 1760, pp. 991–1013; June 1760; pp. 1414–1434; November 1761, pp. 2729–2750.

On Méhégan: BUAM, XXXVII, p. 43; Cioranescu, p. 1228; J.-S. Spink, 'Un Abbé philosophe à la Bastille (1751–1753): G.-A. de Méhégan et son Zoroastre', in *The Age of the Enlightenment*, ed. W.H. Barber (Edinburgh and London, 1967), pp. 252–274; Dagen, pp. 582–583.

## 2.1 Jean-Baptiste de Boyer d'Argens (1704–1771)

### *Mémoires secrets de la République des Lettres*

Gregorio Piaia

**2.1.1** Born in 1704 in Aix-en-Provence into a family of magistrates, the marquis d'Argens had an adventurous and profligate youth, which involved military service,

travel (among other places he stayed in Italy and Constantinople, following the French ambassador), and periods living at his father's house, during which he devoted himself to his studies and qualified to enter the legal profession. After a bad fall from a horse forced him to leave the army he broke off all relations with his family and in 1735 settled down in The Hague. There he earned a living through the intense production of literary works, which met with great success among the public and aroused the admiration of Voltaire himself, as well as that of the crown prince of Prussia, the future Frederick II. In 1742, d'Argens, who had been in Stuttgart for 2 years in the service of the dowager duchess, accepted an invitation to Berlin and lived at the court of the philosopher king for over 25 years, receiving the titles of chamberlain and director of the *Académie royale des sciences et belles-lettres*. He thus joined the circle of *philosophes* (among whom the most prominent were Voltaire, Maupertuis, and La Mettrie) who had turned Berlin into the capital of the *lumières*, and he established a comradely friendship with Frederick II. In Berlin he met Lessing and acted as a protector to Moses Mendelssohn, who became his secretary. His relationship with the king subsequently deteriorated and in 1769, made nostalgic by old age, he returned to his own country where he was reconciled with his family. He died on 11th January, 1771 in the Castle of La Garde, near Toulon, where he was staying with his sister: according to various testimonies, he returned to the bosom of the Church *in extremis*; according to the *philosophes*, he was forced to receive the sacraments.

**2.1.2** The marquis d'Argens' vast literary production (Cioranescu's list includes over 40 titles) was concentrated in his the Dutch period in particular, but also continued, albeit at a slower pace, during his years in Berlin. It starts with an autobiography (*Mémoires de M. le marquis d'Argens*, London, 1735; ed. Y. Coirault, Paris, 1993) and includes several novels (among which let us mention *Thérèse philosophe* (The Hague, 1748; ed. F. Moureau, Saint-Étienne, 2000), which has also been attributed to Diderot and Xavier d'Arles de Montigny) and a series of *lettres*, *mémoires*, and *réflexions* on assorted subjects, in which the author fully reveals his *esprit philosophique* and varied cultural interests, which ranged from natural sciences to painting – on the latter see *Réflexions critiques sur les différentes écoles de peinture* (Paris, 1752). D'Argens' 'correspondence' was particularly famous: imitating Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (1721), he subsequently published *Lettres juives, ou correspondance philosophique, historique et critique entre un Juif voyageur à Paris et ses correspondants en divers endroits* (The Hague: P. Paupie, 1736, 6 duodecimo Vols; English transl.: *Jewish letters: or, a correspondence . . .*, Newcastle, 1739–1744), *Lettres cabalistiques, ou correspondance philosophique, historique et critique entre deux cabalistes, divers esprits élémentaires et le seigneur Astaroth* (The Hague: Paupie, 1737–1738, 4 duodecimo Vols), and *Lettres chinoises, ou correspondance philosophique, historique et critique entre un Chinois voyageur à Paris et ses correspondants à la Chine, en Moscovie, en Perse et au Japon* (The Hague: Paupie, 1739–1740, 5 duodecimo Vols; English transl.: *Chinese letters . . .*, London, 1752), which were reprinted more than once.



In this series of ‘letters’, d’Argens also reveals a specific interest in the history of philosophy: see, for example, in the *Lettres cabalistiques*, letters XIV, XXVII, XXVIII (ed. 1741, I, pp. 145–157; 300–315; 316–352); XXXII and XLIII (II, pp. 14–29; 140–153); LXXX and LXXXII (III, pp. 140–150; 159–167); CXXXVI (IV, pp. 265–270; 307–316); or, in the *Lettres juives*, letter CLXXII (ed. 1738, V, pp. 263–275), which largely derives from the entry ‘Aristote’ in Bayle’s *Dictionnaire* and concerns the disputes over peripatetic philosophy which had taken place in the past. But also in other works on various subjects he uses, to a varying extent, materials and ideas pertaining to the history of philosophy, as in the case of the doxographical surveys concerning the “definition of friendship according to the sentiment of the ancient philosophers” or the opinions of the ancients on the nature of the air (*Nouveaux mémoires, pour servir à l’histoire de l’esprit et du coeur*, The Hague: F.-H. Scheurleer, 1745, I, pp. 6–9 and 287–291).

D’Argens added a lengthy study – with features similar to those of a history of ancient philosophy – to the second edition of his most speculative work, *La philosophie du bon sens*, which had first come out in London in 1737 – English transl.: *Philosophical Dissertations on the Uncertainty of Human Knowledge* (London, 1753). This is a confutation of the theories held by the abbé d’Olivet who, in his *Remarques sur la théologie des philosophes grecs* appended to the French version of Cicero’s *De natura deorum* (*Entretiens de Cicéron sur la nature des dieux*, Paris: J. Estienne, 1721, III, pp. 235–330), had accused Bayle of deliberately increasing the number of ancient materialists. In response to this accusation, d’Argens maintained the theory – which was to reappear in the *Mémoires secrets* – of the essential materialism of all ancient philosophers (*La philosophie du bon sens, ou Réflexions philosophiques, sur l’incertitude des connaissances humaines, à l’usage des Cavaliers et du Beau-Sexe. Nouvelle édition, revue, corrigée et augmentée d’un Examen critique des remarques de Mr l’abbé d’Olivet, de l’Académie Française, sur la théologie des philosophes grecs*, The Hague: P. Paupie, 1746; following editions: 1747, 1754, 1755, 1768, 1769... ). In the Dresden edition of 1754, used here, the *Examen critique* occupies pages 283–476 of the second and last volume, which is divided into 12 chapters; some of these chapters are devoted to the ‘systems’ elaborated by the individual philosophers – Thales, Anaximenes, Anaximander, Anaxagoras, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and Democritus – while others examine the various sources relating to the theology of the Greek philosophers (d’Olivet had explicitly limited himself to Cicero), the meaning of ‘spirit’ among the ancients, and the introduction of the concept of the ‘pure spirituality of God’ into the teaching of the Church.

We can find a complete presentation of the general history of philosophy, on the other hand, in the *Mémoires secrets de la République des Lettres, ou le Théâtre de la vérité* (Amsterdam and The Hague: J. Neaulme-J. Desbordes, 1737–1748, 6 duodecimo Vols; Amsterdam: J. Neaulme, 1744, 7 duodecimo Vols [repr. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1967]). A new and enlarged edition was published under the title *Histoire de l’esprit humain, ou Mémoires secrets et universels de la République des Lettres* (Berlin: Haude et Spener, 1765–1768), 14 volumes. This extensive compilation, in which the framework of seventeenth-century polyhistory

is enlivened by the presence of Pierre Bayle and by the author's own vivacious *esprit*, is also subdivided into 'Letters' (23 in the 1744 edition, to which we shall refer here) preceded by a 'Préface' (I, pp. 1\*–12\*). The objects examined are the learned in general (letter I), the theologians (letters II–IV), the ancient and the modern philosophers (V–XII), the Greek historiographers (including the Christians), the Latin historiographers (XIII–XX), and the Greek and Roman poets (XXI–XXII), while the 23rd and final letter deals with "some Greek and French authors". In this context, the history of philosophy is assigned a privileged place, since it occupies 1,090 out of the total 2,480 pages which make up the text.

Even d'Argens' activity as a translator was related to the field of the history of philosophy. He translated the works traditionally ascribed to Ocellus Lucanus and Timaeus of Locris into French, adding copious notes in which – following the example of Bayle's *remarques* – he discussed various subjects and reiterated his fundamental theories: *Ocellus Lucanus en grec et en français, avec des dissertations sur les principales questions de la métaphysique, de la physique et de la morale des anciens, qui peuvent servir de suite à sa "Philosophie du bon sens"* (Berlin: Haude et Spener, 1762); *Timée de Locres en grec et en français, avec des dissertations [...] qui peuvent servir de suite et de conclusion à la "Philosophie du bon sens"* (Berlin: Haude et Spener, 1763). Both works were reprinted in Paris by J.-F. Bastian in the 3rd year of the Republic (1795), in which edition the Greek text was omitted and most personal criticisms and polemical debates were removed from the notes. The volume containing the works of Timaeus also contains a *Lettre d'Aristote sur le système du monde* (pp. 169–210), which was not present in the first edition: in reality, this was the translation that had been published by Batteux in 1768 (see below, 2.3.2.) and was unscrupulously reprinted here, omitting the notes and the name of the translator. In addition to these works, let us mention the translation of Julian the Apostate – *Défense du paganisme, par l'empereur Julien, en grec et en français, avec des dissertations et des notes pour servir d'éclaircissement au texte et pour en réfuter les erreurs* (Berlin: Haude et Spener, 1764) – which brings this philological parenthesis to a close. We can complete our survey of the marquis d'Argens' literary production by pointing out that he contributed to the *Nouvelle Bibliothèque, ou Histoire littéraire des principaux écrits qui se publient* (The Hague, 1738–1744, 19 Vols), and compiled with Frederick II the *Extrait du "Dictionnaire historique et critique" de Bayle* (1765), on which cf. Rétat, pp. 310–311.

**2.1.3** The references to Bayle in the previous section are not incidental, since d'Argens was the principal propagator of his ideas. Together with Voltaire, he was indeed at the centre of that cultural and ideological movement that aimed to turn the author of the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* into the prototype of the *philosophe* and a "doctor of unbelief" (Rétat, p. 215ff.). This view was to prevail in the sphere of historical criticism too, persisting up until the present day. Hence it is not surprising that the speculative approach shown by the marquis d'Argens – of modest value indeed – rested on open Pyrrhonism, supported by Lockean epistemology and the work of Bayle and other sceptical thinkers, and which, on a religious plane, corresponds to a generic deism and a heated anti-clericalism. The

connotations of d'Argens' philosophical attitude can already be gleaned in the title of his most significant work: he presents himself as a proponent of a "philosophy of common sense", which derives from the recognition of the uncertain nature of human knowledge; a philosophy understood in an amateur way and therefore fully accessible even to ladies and to "people of society", who together with the *véritables savants* are the recipients of his philosophical message (*La philosophie du bon sens* (Dresde, 1754), I, 'Discours préliminaire', § IV, pp. 12 and 15).

These Pyrrhonian themes are developed at length in the five *réflexions* which form the original core of the *Philosophie du bon sens* and concern the uncertain nature of history, logic, the "general principles of physics", metaphysics (which is understood as "supernatural philosophy", or "theology", and is treated starting with a criticism of epistemological, moral, and theological innatism, and ending with deistic theories), and finally judicial astrology. Two other "reflections" were added later, *Sur les douceurs de la société* and *Sur la vie heureuse*, which complete the author's theoretical perspective with ethical and social subjects. This perspective is inspired – as d'Argens himself declares in the dedication to Louis Petit de Bachaumont – by a "modest philosophy", that is to say, a "wise moderation of the mind in its judgements and opinions", and a "mild but useful ethics" (*La philosophie du bon sens*, I, 'Épître').

D'Argens takes care to point out that his scepticism is not absolute but definitely limited by the Cartesian principle of evidence: "First of all we have to state this primary principle", he warns the reader at the beginning of his work, "[that is,] that our reason, which is a gift God has given us to guide us, cannot deceive us in those things that it grasps and distinguishes clearly". Quoting a passage from the *Principia philosophiae*, d'Argens repeats Descartes' argument in which God cannot have deceived us by providing us with a false capacity to discern, hence "reason necessarily [...] cannot see any object which is not true in that which it sees clearly and distinctly. To maintain the contrary means to fall into an exaggerate Pyrrhonism". This principle has been recognised by the "most illustrious philosophers in these recent times", even by those who appear to lean more towards scepticism, such as Bayle (*La philosophie du bon sens*, 'Réflexion I', § 2, 1754, I, pp. 43–45). There are some more Cartesian echoes in the anti-historical attitude shown by d'Argens at the beginning of this work, where he declares that "those who wish to use their reason and carefully reflect on themselves and on the ideas present in their intellect, do not need either the ancient or the modern philosophers in order to discover those truths which are necessary for happiness and for the conduct of their life" (*La philos. du bon sens*, I, pp. 4–5; "this, however," objected a reviewer, supporting a theory that in a less speculative context was to be adopted by d'Argens as well, "does not mean that in order to discover 'those truths which are necessary for happiness and for the conduct of life' we do not need the help of those who concerned themselves with philosophy before us, whose very mistakes may be instructive to us": BF, XXV (1737/II), pp. 233–234).

Positions of a sceptical tendency are also widely expressed in the *Lettres cabalistiques*, where they are supported by historical references. In letter XXXII, for example, d'Argens observes that most "great men" have shown themselves to be

uncertain and doubtful about the nature of things, and to confirm this he mentions the cases or the statements of a series of 25 thinkers, starting with Pherecydes, the “father of philosophers”. This is clearly modelled on the historico-philosophical *excursus* elaborated by the Sceptic Huet (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 142–143), but it should be noted that d’Argens also includes Christian thinkers and contemporaries on this list as well. Indeed, in addition to the Greek and Roman philosophers, he mentions Augustine, Aquinas, Albert the Great, Duns Scotus, Montaigne, Gassendi and his pupil François Bernier, Huet, La Mothe le Vayer (to whom he devotes most space), Descartes (“the restorer of good philosophy [...] he founded all his philosophy on doubt”) and, finally, Locke, who is defined as “the greatest, the wisest, and the most modest of philosophers”: *Lettres cabalistiques* (The Hague, 1741), II, pp. 14–27. This survey was later to be extended by the inclusion of Solomon and some Christian authors in letter LXXX, where d’Argens again puts forward a “Pyrrhonisme raisonnable” and formulates a ruthless criticism of the concept of reason as a “natural light” equally present in all human beings: “If men reflected carefully [...] about how that which they call reason is something arbitrary and liable to receive the different impressions of prejudices, self-conceit, pride, vanity, and finally all the passions, they would trust this alleged natural light which they consider to be a sure guide much less. Indeed, if it represents something truly real and truly fixed and definitive, then it must be the same for all men, it must produce in them the same operations and make them see things in the same way. Now, where does this difference in feelings come from? For what reason does a whole people consider something to be an evident truth, the falseness of which another people is thoroughly convinced? Why does something which is a virtue in Asia become a crime in Europe? Which reason is in accordance with truth? The European or the Asian?” (*Lettres cab.*, III, pp. 146–147).

Using mischievous dialectic, in letter XXVII d’Argens makes use of the arguments of the Church Fathers to demonstrate the “presumption” of all the ancient philosophers, and then turns these weapons against the Fathers themselves, who maintained the most diverse and “foolish” opinions (*Lettres cab.*, I, pp. 312–314, where he does not miss the opportunity to make an anti-clerical aside: “what is most extraordinary is that none of the Fathers, if he were alive today, would escape the accusation of heresy and, even worse, the stake of the Inquisition, if he lived in Spain or in Italy”; see also, in the following letter XXVIII, the sceptical use of the traditional doxography on the nature of God and the soul in the Fathers). No man, he stresses in letter LXXXII, has been “really wise”, that is to say free from serious errors, hence we may say that “the human mind deserves more compassion than admiration”; and here d’Argens pauses to emphasise the faults of the most famous ancient (Aristotle) and modern (Leibniz) philosopher, as evidence of the “weaknesses of the human mind” (III, pp. 159–167). Later on (letter LXXXV) he almost appears to give up the practice of philosophy, preferring “happy ignorance, which is more useful for life’s tranquillity and serenity”, rather than the “relentless disputes” which set the various sects against one another (the Aristotelians and Cartesians, Gassendists, Leibnizians and Newtonians). “In this conflict of

philosophical jurisdiction”, he wonders, “which party shall I embrace? I cannot support an opinion which I know to be opposed by those who support other opinions; might it not be possible for them all to be equally mistaken?” (III, pp. 191–192).

It seems, therefore, that for d’Argens the history of philosophy merely functions as a store of negative examples, since it is the history of mistakes and “chimeras” according to the current view among Enlightenment thinkers. Nevertheless, he does acknowledge that philosophy, along with history, has a positive function as well, and praises the value of these disciplines compared with the other activities of the human mind. In this regard, let us note the interesting considerations formulated in letter CXXXVI. Wondering who the greatest men born in France in recent times are, d’Argens mentions the historian Jacques-Auguste de Thou, the author of the celebrated *Historia sui temporis* (1604), and even five philosophers (Montaigne, La Mothe le Vayer, Gassendi, Descartes, and Bayle) whose profiles he rapidly sketches, particularly admiringly in the case of Bayle, “the most wide-ranging genius nature has produced” (*Lettres cab.*, IV, p. 316).

These choices are justified on the basis of the general principle that “a man of letters is more or less respectable depending on whether his writings are more or less useful to the happiness of peoples, to the good of society, and to the advancement of the arts and the sciences”. Now, the works of the theologians, observes d’Argens, serve only “to muddle religion and create disputes”; he expresses an equally severe judgement on jurists, lawyers, and orators, while poets possess both positive and negative aspects. On the contrary, “it is among the philosophers and the wise historians that we should seek the good absolutely separated from all evil and deprived of the dangerous thorns by which it has been closely surrounded in other places. The former”, and here he sketches a portrait of the true *philosophe*, “teach men the means to practise sound virtue, provide them with support against superstition and fanaticism, [...] reveal the uncertainty and vanity of most of those things we so eagerly pursue, disclose the secrets of nature, and show the power of the Creator in arranging and perfecting the created works”. For their part, “good historians [...] preserve for posterity the memory of the actions of great men” and perform an essential function because “nothing is more necessary to man than knowing his fellow men”, and history is “the eternal mirror of human life” (*Lettres cab.*, IV, pp. 313–314).

It is to this mix of reflections and historical references that the presentation of Deslandes’ *Histoire critique de la philosophie* in letter XLIII must be related. Deslandes’ work had just been published in Amsterdam (1737), and the presentation is a true *compte rendu* which implicitly contains the fundamental ideas that permeate the work on the history of philosophy elaborated in the same period by d’Argens in his *Mémoires secrets de la République des Lettres*. D’Argens particularly emphasises the “critical” nature of Deslandes’ historiographical work (on which see *Models*, II, pp. 177–211): “I have just read a book [...] full of excellent things, written with such honesty and noble daring, worthy of a true philosopher”. After a general presentation of the work, it is observed that the author “confutes several

[opinions of the ancients] with great mastery”, while he reinforces some other opinions by turning to new arguments; “he draws the portraits of the most famous philosophers with a steady and courageous hand, he represents them not according to the passion, prejudices, hostility, or preconceptions with which they have very often been depicted, but as they really were. He formulates judgements on their morality, honesty, and character with as much impartiality as the wisdom with which he establishes the value and merit of their works” (*Lettres cab.*, II, pp. 140–141).

D’Argens puts forward an interpretation of the *Histoire critique de la philosophie* from the explicit perspective of the Enlightenment, without any of the caution and ambiguity that Deslandes had used to protect himself. It is significant that some of the themes touched on by Deslandes are developed here in a decisively anti-clerical direction. In the *Histoire critique*, for example, the ancient Cynics had been compared to those “sectarians who tried to degrade and dishonour” the Christian religion (the Ebionites, the Manichaeans, the Waldenses, the Anabaptists, the Mennonites, and the Quakers). But d’Argens does not consider this comparison to be pertinent and he scornfully re-proposes the parallel between the Cynics and the Capuchin Friars, while the Thomists and the Scotists are compared to the Pythagoreans because of their “servile submission” to the leaders of their respective schools (*Lettres cab.*, II, pp. 145–146; cf. A.-F. Boureau-Deslandes, *Histoire critique de la philosophie*, Amsterdam, 1737, II, p. 192; but see also, in letter L [II, p. 220], the disdainful comparison between Diogenes the Cynic and St Francis of Assisi: “They proved to be equally foolish, equally dirty, and both had a bunch of idlers for disciples”).

On a political level, d’Argens uses an autobiographical anecdote stemming from the time that Deslandes spent in England (during dinner together, Newton proposed a toast not to the health of the king, as was customary, but to “all honest men of any country” who aimed to know the truth and who shared a common faith in the Supreme Being) to draw a contrast between the figure of the intellectual who is useful to society and that of the ambitious and harmful prince, and to present the ideal of the philosopher king which was to be embodied a few years later by Frederick II of Prussia: “The emphasis that this wise author [=Deslandes] lays on the respect we owe great men is one of the best passages in his work. He shows that they must be respected much more by society than those princes inebriated with their greatness and useless for the good of their peoples, and those conquerors born to bring misfortune to human beings [. . .]. Would it not be madness to compare Charles IX and Henry III to Descartes, or Charles II and James II to Newton? [. . .]. We have to agree on this truth: nothing is greater and worthier of admiration than a wise and virtuous prince; nothing is more contemptible than a tyrant” (*Lettres cab.*, II, pp. 147–148; cf. Deslandes, *Hist. critique*, II, p. 264).

As for the concepts that inspire the *Mémoires secrets de la République des Lettres* more specifically, we should point out above all the relationship that links this work with Bayle’s plan to create a dictionary intended to “hunt out mistakes”, but also with much more modest studies – such as the *Traité de l’opinion* by Saint-Aubin

quoted above – which are nonetheless a sign of the mixture of scholarly curiosity and scepticism elevated to an art and science of suspicion which characterised the cultural climate of the early eighteenth century in France. D’Argens’ purpose was indeed to “disclose the mistakes hidden under the veil of deceit in which they have been wrapped, upheld by eminent minds, authorised by custom, and accepted as true by a majority”. The respect we owe to the great minds should not make us forget that each of them “is subject to human nature and is hence fallible”. Nor is this criticism purely negative because “if criticism is correct I become useful to the public: I destroy a false prejudice”. D’Argens aims therefore to present himself as a critical intermediary between the works of the “great men”, both ancient and modern, and the vast public of readers, deliberately neglecting the useless opinions and books of “bad authors” (*Mém. secrets*, ed. 1744, I, ‘Préface’, pp. 1\*–5\*; see also ‘Letter I’, p. 3, where d’Argens looks forward to the establishment in the Republic of Letters of “a supreme court which will judge the works of the great men with the impartiality appropriate to magistrates”).

It is within this framework that d’Argens places his treatment of the philosophers, which – unlike that relating to the theologians – has a more strictly chronological structure. His purpose, he declares is “to write with the same neutrality [as that used in dealing with the theologians] what I think about the abuses which have reigned and still reign among the philosophers” and make “known the mistakes as well as the good things contained in their works”. To this end, the philosophers will be grouped into two different “classes”, the ancients and the moderns, a clear reference to the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*. Hence, “after examining the chief opinions of these authors separately, it will be easy for you, by comparing them with one another, to identify those to which you have to give your preference” (*Mém. secrets*, II, pp. 126–127).

## 2.1.4 *Mémoires secrets de la République des Lettres*

**2.1.4.1** The eight “letters” which, as d’Argens himself observes before concluding his treatment, together constitute a “course in ancient and modern philosophy” (*Mém. secrets*, ed. 1744, IV, p. 407) are structured as follows: LETTER V (vol. II, pp. 127–270): § I: short introduction; § II: ‘We risk falling into error if we judge the opinions of the philosophers on the basis of what has been said by several ancient authors, above all the holy Fathers’; § III: ‘On the merits of the ancient philosophers, the opinions of modern authors are shared as equally as those of the ancients’; § IV: ‘Analysis of the moral views of the major Greek philosophers’; § V: ‘The ancient philosophers had only very confused ideas on the divinity’. LETTER VI (vol. II, pp. 271–383): § I: short introduction; § II: ‘Concerning the different opinions of the philosophers on the essence and the seat of the soul’. LETTER VII (vol. III, pp. 1–124): § I: ‘Analysis of the main opinions of the ancient philosophers on the

general principles of physics'. LETTER VIII (vol. III, pp. 125–276): § I: untitled (it serves as a link between the treatment of the ancient philosophers and that of the philosophers more properly considered as modern); § II: 'Analysis of the views of the major modern philosophers on the nature of God, the essence of the soul, and on some physical opinions'; LETTERS IX and X (vol. III, pp. 277–412; vol. IV, pp. 1–146; neither are subdivided). LETTER XI (vol. IV, pp. 147–311): [§ I]: short introduction; § II: 'Presentation of some principles of Cartesianism derived from the books of Monsieur de Fontenelle, complemented by some reflections on the works of this ingenious author'; § III: 'On Monsieur Newton' (pp. 197–311). LETTER XII (vol. IV, pp. 312–416, not subdivided). The presentation has bibliographical notes and quotations at the foot of the page which are particularly lengthy in the section concerning the modern age. The whole work lacks an index but has an ample 'General table of subjects' in alphabetical order (vol. VII, pp. 157–342).

**2.1.4.2** D'Argens adds some subdivisions to the more general division between ancient and modern philosophers. The period that deals with the ancient philosophers, comprising the Greeks and the Romans (Eastern philosophies are never mentioned), covers the time from Pherecydes to the Neoplatonists and Julian the Apostate, but the author makes it clear that "after Plutarch all the remaining ancient philosophers are historians of philosophy rather than philosophers" (this is the case of Diogenes Laertius), while thinkers like Plotinus, Porphyry, and Jamblicus "deserve only to be called theologians of paganism" (*Mém. secrets*, III, pp. 146–147). The Church Fathers are obviously not examined since the ancient and modern theologians have been dealt with in the previous 'Letters'. As for the modern philosophers, they are divided into two "classes", the Scholastics and "the learned men (*savants*) of these last centuries" (III, p. 125), but they are subsequently considered in succession: Avicenna, Averroes, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Cardano, Montaigne, Bacon, La Mothe le Vayer, Bérigard, Gassendi, Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Hobbes, Locke, Leibniz, Bayle, Fontenelle, Newton, Voltaire, s'Gravesande, Regnault, and Huet. At the beginning of 'Letter VII', d'Argens refers to a more structured periodization concerning the development of physics: ancient philosophy was followed by "five or six centuries of ignorance", after which, owing to the introduction of Aristotle in the schools and to the revival of philosophical studies, there followed three centuries dominated by "bad taste, love of dispute, and the wish to emerge by presenting subtle but useless theses"; finally, "common sense began to reappear", nature in itself was studied, and attention was also directed towards other Greek thinkers whose thoughts had often been "much more reasonable than those of Aristotle and his followers" (III, pp. 2–3).

**2.1.4.3** The treatment of ancient philosophy possesses little originality and is characterised by two fundamental theories. The first, which derives from Bayle and is also put forward by d'Argens elsewhere, is that all ancient philosophers had a confused and almost absurd conception of God and the human soul, and their positions resembled those of Spinoza or Vanini. Against the concordist theory of père Mourgues, for whom all pagan philosophers had rejected polytheism



(cf. *Models*, II, p. 95), d'Argens observes that all ancient thinkers – except Plato, “who nevertheless was no more enlightened than the others” – conceived of God as corporeal and therefore composed of parts, and for this reason they “infinitely multiplied the number of gods, without being aware of it”. On the basis of a collection of passages from Spinoza's *Ethics*, he shows that the only difference between the system of the Stoics or the Pythagoreans and that of Spinoza concerns their terminology (*Mém. secrets*, II, pp. 238–253). Later on, when dealing with the Eleatic school, he distinguishes between “two types of Spinozism, or rather Parmenidism: the first is material and claims that all bodies are nothing other than modifications of a single substance, which is God; the second is spiritual and considers all the ideas produced by men to be modes of a single immaterial substance, which is God” (III, pp. 80–81). The latter category was to be applied to Malebranche as well, “because to suppose that we see everything in God is, so to speak, to claim that God is the soul common to all beings” (III, p. 399; see also IV, p. 80, where he observes that, with his theory of the monad, Leibniz presents “a system inspired by pure idealism and becomes a Spinozist”).

Going back to the ancient philosophers, d'Argens states that Plato made his three principles (God, idea, matter) into as many gods and thus “fell into a polytheism just as great as that of the Stoics” (II, pp. 260–262, where there is a passage from Bayle's *Continuation des pensées diverses sur la comète*; see also pp. 321–329, where d'Argens emphasises the analogy between Plato and Spinoza concerning the conception of the human soul as part of the soul of the world, that is to say, a modification of the single substance). Clearly critical of Pythagorean and Platonic positions, d'Argens obviously approves of the Epicurean conception of the soul as divided into two parts, a sensible and a rational, and considers this doctrine to be compatible with Christian dogma. Epicurus' psychology, however, is considered to be “less absurd” than the others and at least consistent with the principles on which it is based, whereas the Pythagoreans, the Platonists, and the Stoics drew false conclusions from correct principles and finally made the soul of man equal to the divinity (II, pp. 284–288, 297, 357–365; on Epicurus' ‘coherence’ in Bayle, cf. *Models*, II, pp. 126–127).

The other fundamental theory (which appears to be inspired by the work of the Jesuit Noël Regnault *L'origine ancienne de la physique nouvelle*, on which see below, Chap. 3, Introd., a) is that “modern physicists know very few things which were not already known or at least perceived by one of the ancient philosophers”. Consequently, the moderns have done nothing but unite the different elements already discovered by the Greeks and the Romans, and “built a new hypothesis starting from very ancient assumptions” (III, pp. 2–4). This theory is briefly illustrated in the treatment of Epicurean physics as follows: “[perhaps] I was wrong to tell you that all modern systems concerning the general principles of physics, the construction of the universe [...] are ancient hypotheses in fashionable clothes, or rather Greek fantasies dressed in the French, the English, and the Dutch manner? You have seen the models of Malebranche, Descartes, Gassendi, Spinoza, and Newton. I admit that all these philosophers have added several considerable things to the hypotheses

they used; but, in the end, they always built on a foundation which did not belong to them. Vacuum, which is absolutely necessary to the Newtonian system, belongs to Democritus and Epicurus. Descartes owes extension and the plenum of contiguous bodies to the Peripatetics: his subtle matter is so similar to Aristotle's ether that it only differs in name [...]. The indefiniteness of matter belongs to Chrysippus: he invented this word, which basically means nothing, in order to minimise the difficulty he found himself in when admitting infinite matter; this is another theft committed by Descartes at the expense of Antiquity" (III, pp. 101–102).

Coming from a *philosophe*, it might seem surprising to see the return to a theme which had already been used against the moderns by the adversaries of Descartes and the new philosophy. In reality, this aspect too should be seen in the light of that sceptic moderation which prevented d'Argens from adopting positions in the field of historical interpretation (and speculation) that were too definite, too radical. The same spirit of moderation induces him, for example, to defend Diogenes Laertius against the accusation of being prolix and imprecise, or urges him to distance himself from the haughty and disdainful attitude with which Voltaire judged "the greatest men nature has originated" (III, p. 147; IV, p. 345). This *medietas* is not always on show, however: Pythagoras is defined blatantly as "the greatest cheat produced by Antiquity" and his doctrine of metempsychosis is ridiculed to the point where he is compared to a comic character of French theatre ("Pythagoras, in his various transmigrations, had done almost as many jobs as Crispin in the *Folies amoureuses*": II, pp. 302–303; the comedy is by Jean-François Regnard and was staged for the first time in 1704).

Indeed d'Argens, whose intention was to awaken the interest of his wide public, enlivens his work in several places with witty and sometimes spicy remarks, adding ironic comments on the theologians and the religious orders, above all the Jesuits. The alleged chastity of Democritus, Zeno the Stoic, and Newton is described with mischievous insinuation, but, when describing Pythagoras' journey to Egypt, d'Argens also affirms that the priests of this country "were almost as roguish and arrogant as the monks of the present day". The legend of Empedocles' sandal, which was found on the ridge of Etna, gives him the opportunity to repeat Boccaccio's tale of the sandals left by the friar near his mistress's bed... (II, pp. 165, 188–189, 224; III, p. 45; IV, p. 308). Socrates' moral stature is no defence against d'Argens' witty parallels, which were intended to receive a warm reception in the *salons*. "We should consider him to be the first Jesuit who existed in the universe, because more than two thousand years before St Ignatius he did what the Jesuits are now accused of having done in China": this is how d'Argens comments on how Socrates adapted himself to the traditional customs and offered sacrifices to the gods, even though he inwardly believed in only one divinity. A remark is also made about Xanthippe's "impertinences": "How many husbands are there in Paris who, without being philosophers, have adapted themselves to evils worse than those suffered by Socrates? He was covered with insults, vases were dropped on his head, [but] he was not cuckolded; or at least this is not handed down by history; but in France who knows how many husbands are beaten, cuckolded, and happy?" (II, pp. 197

and 201–202; in this regard, cf. *Le mari cocu, battu, content. Conte de La Fontaine, mis en comédie* par M. de C[astre] de W[iege], Metz, 1738).

Apart from these light-hearted comments, the ethical and civil commitment to the *esprit philosophique* becomes clear in the condemnation of the “dreadful morals [...] worthier of a native of the Caribbean than of a philosopher”, which led Plato to admit laws allowing masters to kill their slaves and servants, and in d’Argens’ rejection of the Stoic doctrine of suicide, considered to be the result of fanaticism and folly, contrary to reason, divine law, and the “good of civil society” (II, pp. 206 and 230; see also III, pp. 40–41, where he praises England which, just like ancient Sicily, “honours and protects the sciences”, whereas “the French sent Descartes into exile and forced him to seek shelter in some foreign nation”). This commitment however is very limited in its social dimension, as we can see from the scornful tone with which d’Argens talks of the humblest levels of society: “I do not think there any animals stupider than most of the peasants and shepherds who live in the country and in the forests”, he observes when confuting those who maintained the immortality of souls on the basis of their great capability for knowledge (II, pp. 342–343).

D’Argens centres his treatment on the study of the individual philosophers, with no concern for the way in which the transition from one epoch to another took place. The period of Scholasticism is examined briefly and with the usual critical tone, but what is notable is the positive assessment of Thomas Aquinas’ morals and more particularly his “reasonable sentiment” – contrasted with that of St Augustine and the Jansenists – which admits the possibility of salvation for the virtuous pagans as well. “We are delighted”, he observes in this regard, “to see the theologian, illuminated by the torch of reason and with the help of philosophy, reason in accordance with the notions shared by the whole of mankind, I would dare to say with self-evident notions” (III, pp. 185–186). Among the writers chosen to represent modern thought in a strict sense, he devotes most space to Newton (a full 114 pages), followed by Gassendi (62), Locke (57), and then Descartes, Fontenelle, Voltaire, Bayle, Leibniz, and s’Gravesande (40–50 pages each). There is remarkably little space devoted to Bacon (10 pages), who is credited however with having been in England – like Montaigne in France – “the first destroyer of Scholastic chimeras” (III, p. 211). As for Spinoza, d’Argens provides little information on his life, because his ideas had already been presented in the course of the comparison between him and the ancient thinkers. Among the moderns let us mention the inclusion of père Regnault, to whom d’Argens frequently refers and two of whose works he examines: the *Origine ancienne de la physique nouvelle* and *Entretiens physiques d’Ariste et d’Eudoxe, ou Physique nouvelle en dialogues* (Paris, 1729), which are inspired by Cartesian physics and are appreciated because they were “written clearly and are intelligible to everyone”. Like the good populariser that he was, d’Argens is very sensitive to this aspect and devotes much space to Fontenelle precisely because in his works “the system of Descartes is explained much more clearly and pleasantly than in the books of this philosopher” (IV, pp. 151–397).

D'Argens' sceptical orientation becomes clear not only in the emphasis placed on figures like Montaigne, La Mothe le Vayer, Bayle, and Huet (whose chapter on the history of philosophy in the *Traité philosophique de la faiblesse de l'esprit humain* he explicitly mentions: IV, p. 415), but also in the caution, if not embarrassment with which he considers the bitter conflict between the Cartesians and the Newtonians, which its contestants defined in terms "absolute triumph or total defeat", making "it very dangerous to dare to say what you think, especially when you do not take the side of either party" (IV, pp. 147–148). His disenchanted scepticism ("Systems follow on from one another like waves in the sea; he who made the universe knows which is the true system": IV, p. 188) allows d'Argens nevertheless to move with a certain freedom between the two sides. Although he declares himself to be "more persuaded of Newton's opinions than of those held by the others", he devotes some space, "as a severe critic and a zealous Cartesian", to presenting the objections against the indivisibility of matter *ad infinitum* and vacuum and attraction. He warns against the excessive confidence of the "Newtonians" and reproaches Voltaire himself for "yielding too easily to Newtonian enthusiasm" in judging Descartes' works as useless (IV, pp. 231, 249; III, p. 383). As regards the qualities and the faults of the modern philosophers, the virtue which is most praised therefore is the "modesty" of Gassendi and Spinoza, Locke, Bayle, Newton, and s'Gravesande, while the "vanity" and "conceit" of those such as Descartes or Leibniz is criticised. It is not incidental that the section of *Mémoires secrets* devoted to the history of philosophy ends with the sceptic Huet (even though he comes chronologically before other philosophers examined in the previous pages) and with a few words on Sextus Empiricus, whose arguments are judged to be particularly suitable "for mortifying the vanity of the semi-savants and preventing the true [savants] from overrating their knowledge" (IV, p. 416).

**2.1.4.4** Written straight off during a period of intense literary production, d'Argens' history of philosophy is like a *feuilleton* which outgrew the plans of the author himself, forced to "multiply" his letters on the history of philosophy from five to eight (III, pp. 276 and 411–412). While the presentation of ancient philosophy revolves around a fourfold thematic framework (morals, theology, the doctrine of the soul, and physics), modern philosophy is presented according to the succession of the most important thinkers considered together. The general criterion adopted by d'Argens is to identify the qualities and the faults of the philosophers, who are examined not only with reference to their doctrines but also to their behaviour. The result is not a systematic reappraisal but rather a critical survey of the different philosophical theories, written in a lively, conversational style, which resembles Bayle's *remarques* but lacks the historiographical and speculative rigour that had characterised the *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. Similarly, in d'Argens we again find the connection, typical of Bayle, between scepticism and methodology, which induces him to consider the Fathers' judgements on the ancient philosophers with suspicion, and even those by the modern authors themselves, and to privilege a direct analysis of the texts ("If I want to act prudently, then, before taking

sides, I will personally examine the controversy in question and will formulate my judgement concerning the trial on the basis of the original documents, not the reports by the lawyers, who are always careful to conceal what may harm their case”: II, pp. 153–154; cf. *Models*, II, pp. 117 and 131–132).

However, far from sharing the *désespoir de la vérité* which tormented Bayle, d’Argens transforms the feeling with a patina of light scepticism and a journalistic tone. As for the sources used, they are mostly second-hand in the case of ancient philosophy (La Mothe le Vayer, Dacier, Mourgues, Bayle, Regnault, and especially Deslandes, in addition obviously to Diogenes Laertius); but we should point out the frequent and extensive use of Lucretius, not only to explain the doctrines of the ancients, but also to confute them, as in the cases of Anaxagoras and Heraclitus (II, pp. 15–19, 31–35). When dealing with the modern philosophers, on the other hand, the author draws directly on their works, which are abundantly quoted and discussed. This sort of grand *collage*, held together by a lively, discursive style, also contains passages from the *Philosophie du bon sens* and the *Lettres juives*, which were published in the same period.

**2.1.5** In the nineteenth century the marquis d’Argens was considered to be “one of the *enfants perdus* of eighteenth-century philosophy” (Franck, I, p. 186) and, later on, as one of the “masters of the new *esprit*” along with Voltaire and Montesquieu (Mornet, *Les origines intellectuelles*, pp. 34–35). His varied journalistic background meant that he was able to help transform the typical themes of the *Lumières* into everyday language. The literary channels he used to this end also included the historiography of philosophy, which he began by following the path of the *histoire critique* opened up by Deslandes, but with much a greater chance of success than the latter, labelled by Voltaire as a “flat, provincial *bel-esprit*” (cf. *Models*, II, p. 207). Although an eminently populist work, d’Argens’ treatment of the history of philosophy was used many years later in Steinacher’s compendium (see below, Sect. 8.3.). The first volume of the *Mémoires secrets* was favourably reviewed by the *Bibliothèque Française* (“Here is a book of criticism formulated according to a new taste, and it is to be recommended both for the material it treats and for the spirit and elegance of its author’s style”: BF, XXVI, 1738/II, p. 274); but the subsequent volumes, which included, among other things, the history of philosophy, were not reviewed. This being the case, let us point out instead the reviews published in the *Journal encyclopédique* of the translations of the works of Ocellus Lucanus and Timaeus of Locris, which offer some considerations on the study of ancient philosophy. This is presented as a “vast area” which, despite the work of many, is far from being “completely opened up” because of the distance in time that separates us from the ancient philosophers and the “obscurity” of their doctrines. In order to overcome these obstacles we require the aid of the “philosophical spirit” and “sound literature”, since “he who is only a man of letters is too concerned with words and does not grasp the philosophical meaning”, while the pure philosopher, “too taken up with the ideas of Descartes, Locke, Leibniz etc., confuses modern opinions with ancient ones” and sees similarities everywhere between quite different

theories. In this framework, the author emphasises the novelty of the approach attempted by d'Argens, which allows us to penetrate "into the true sanctuary of ancient philosophy" through the translation of and commentary on its two most ancient documents. In particular, the lengthy notes are considered to be "just as many treatises which develop the succession of ancient opinions and present, as it were, their filiation" (JE, 1762, 1/1, pp. 3–7).

**2.1.6** On d'Argens' life, works, and thought: Franck, I, pp. 186–187; DBF, III, cols 522–525; Cioranescu, I, pp. 244–246; J.-Ph. Damiron, *Mémoire sur le marquis d'Argens* (Paris, 1856; repr. Geneva, 1968); H. Lion, 'Rousseau et d'Argens', *Rev. Hist. litt. France*, XXIII (1926), pp. 415–418; E. Johnston, *Le marquis d'Argens, sa vie et ses oeuvres. Essai biographique et critique* (Paris, 1928; repr. Geneva, 1971); N.R. Bush, *The marquis d'Argens and his philosophical correspondence. A critical study of d'Argens' "Lettres juives", "Lettres cabalistiques" and "Lettres chinoises"* (Ann Arbor, 1953); Vernière, pp. 338, 353, 407–412; J. Ehrard, *L'idée de nature en France dans la première moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1963), pp. 295 ff.; R. Trousson, 'Voltaire et le marquis d'Argens', *Studi francesi*, X (1966), pp. 226–239; R. Geissler, *Boureau-Deslandes. Ein Materialist der Frühaufklärung* (Berlin, 1967), pp. 51, 64, 91, 172; Rétat, pp. 144–145, 243–252 and *passim*; J. Molino, *Le Bon sens du M<sup>rs</sup> d'Argens, un philosophe en 1740*, Thèse Lettres (Univ. Paris-IV, 1972); I. Bugliani, 'Passione e ragione, ordine e sovversione, nell'opera narrativa del marquis d'Argens', *Saggi e ricerche di letteratura francese*, XIV (1975), pp. 223–286; W. Steinsieck, *Die Funktion der Reise- und Briefliteratur in der Aufklärung untersucht am Beispiel der "Lettres chinoises" des M<sup>rs</sup> d'Argens*, Diss. (Aachen, 1975); Dagen, pp. 508–509; D. Rigo Bienaimé, *"Thérèse philosophe", romanzo libertino e modello antropologico* (Pisa, 1979); R. Grandroute, 'A propos du marquis d'Argens', in *Le journalisme d'Ancien Régime* (Lyon, 1982), pp. 315–331; S. Larkin, *Correspondance entre Prosper Marchand e le marquis d'Argens* (Oxford, 1984); *La société française du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle dans les Lettres juives du marquis d'Argens. Anthologie*, I. Vissière and J.-L. Vissière eds. (Aix-en-Provence, 1990); *Le marquis d'Argens. Colloque international de 1988. Actes*, ed. J.-L. Vissière (Aix-en-Provence, 1990); G. Festa, 'D'Argens/Sade. Convergences d'une esthétique', *SVEC*, vol. CCLXXXIV (1991), pp. 363–369; G. Pigeard de Gurbert, 'Le marquis d'Argens, ou le matérialisme au style indirect', in *Materia actiosa. Antiquité, Âge classique, Lumières. Mélanges en l'honneur d'Olivier Bloch*, M. Benítez, A. McKenna, G. Paganini, and J. Salem eds. (Paris, 2000), pp. 473–485; *Der Marquis d'Argens*, H.U. Seifert and J.L. Seban eds. (Wiesbaden, 2004); A. Arrigoni, 'Préfaces et dédicaces des romans du marquis d'Argens', in *Préfaces romanesques*, M. Kozul, J. Herman, and P. Pelckmans eds. (Louvain, 2005), pp. 233–242; G. Mensching, in *Ueberweg*, II/2, pp. 502–505; G. Piaia, *Taleta in Parnaso*, pp. 231–232 and 349–351.

On the reception of his works: BF, XXV (1737), II, pp. 230–248; XXVI (1738), II, pp. 274–290; JE, 1762, 1/1, pp. 3–25; 1/2, pp. 23–43; VIII/1, pp. 3–28; VIII/2, pp. 3–17.

## 2.2 Alexandre Savérien (1720–1805)

### *Histoire des philosophes modernes*

### *Histoire des philosophes anciens jusqu' à la Renaissance des Lettres*

Giuliano Bergamaschi\*

**2.2.1** Nautical engineer, expert in mathematics, physics, and philosophy, Alexandre Savérien was an intellectual who cultivated a range of the most diverse interests. Born in Arles on 16th July, 1720, he brilliantly accomplished his studies in mathematics and naval engineering, becoming a naval engineer when he was just 20 years old. In his early work *Nouvelle théorie de la manoeuvre des vaisseaux* (Paris, 1745), he worked on the developments of infinitesimal calculus by J. Bernoulli and elaborated a new theory of sea manoeuvres, in opposition to that proposed by Pierre Bouguer, a renowned hydrographer and explorer. In his heated polemic with Bouguer, Savérien responded by confirming his calculations which had been validated by Bernoulli himself, from whom he received testimony of high esteem and benevolence (see the two letters written by Bernoulli to Savérien quoted in the *Hist. phil. mod.*, IV, pp. 238–244). He had no greater success with his *Traité des instruments propres à observer les astres sur mer* (Paris, 1752): the description of new and more precise optical instruments seemed to arouse the interest of the French government with a view to their possible installation on ships, but the initiative came to nought. Savérien, who, moreover, had been one of the first to support the institution of a naval Academy and a specific 'journal' concerning the problems of navigation, became discouraged as he failed to progress in his career as a naval engineer, and gave up practising his profession, devoting himself to study and publication in the fields of mathematics and physics and the history of philosophy. This new activity gained him admission to the Academy of Lyons, even though his works, which were reprinted several times, did not enjoy particular critical success. In 1795, poor and in his declining years, the Convention granted him a pension. He died on 28th May, 1805.

**2.2.2** Savérien began his literary production with a series of writings on nautical technique, relating to his profession: in addition to the two works quoted above, let us mention *La nature discutée et soumise à de nouvelles loix* (Paris, 1747) and *L'art de mesurer sur mer le sillage du vaisseau* (Paris, 1750). These technical works were accompanied by a *Dictionnaire historique, théorique et pratique de la marine* (Paris, 1758), which was subsequently much used by nautical writers because of its thoroughness and precision. In 1753, in addition to the *Histoire critique du calcul des infiniment petits*, he published, again in Paris, the *Dictionnaire universel de mathématique et de physique, où l'on traite de l'origine, du progrès de ces deux*

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\*Revised and updated by Gregorio Piaia.

*sciences et des arts qui en dépendent, et des diverses révolutions qui leur sont arrivées jusqu'à notre temps*, in two volumes. In the preface to this work, Savérien attempted to outline "a table or reasoned system of the mathematical sciences", which would make all the sciences depend on one another on the basis of man's capabilities and needs, from arithmetic to naval architecture, both civil and military (cf. Dagen, pp. 58–59).

This framework, in which the "genealogy of the sciences" corresponds to the historical development of society, was subsequently extended and structured into a true history of the human mind, which Savérien published in four volumes over a dozen years. The series opens with *Histoire des progrès de l'esprit humain dans les sciences exactes, et dans les arts qui en dépendent* [...]. Avec un abrégé de la vie des plus célèbres auteurs dans ces sciences (Paris: Lacombe, 1766, pp. XII–540), which comprises mathematics, astronomy, gnomonics, chronology, navigation, optics, mechanics, acoustics and music, geography, and architecture. After several years, it was followed by the *Histoire des progrès de l'esprit humain dans les sciences naturelles* [...]. Avec un abrégé de la vie des plus célèbres auteurs... (Paris: Lacombe, 1775, pp. XVI–404), devoted to physics and chemistry as well as to their applications in fields such as glassmaking and dyeing. The third volume of the series is devoted to the philosophical and literary fields and to law: *Histoire des progrès de l'esprit humain dans les sciences intellectuelles et dans les arts qui en dépendent* [...]. Avec un abrégé de la vie [...] (Paris: Lacombe, 1777, pp. XVI–528), in which Savérien examines (in this order) dialectics, logic, ontology, cosmology, psychology, natural theology, natural religion, morals, legislation and jurisprudence, politics, grammar, rhetoric, eloquence, and poetry. The last volume (*Histoire des progrès de l'esprit humain dans les sciences et dans les arts qui en dépendent. Histoire naturelle* [...], Paris: Humblot, 1778, pp. XII–545) comprises geology, hydrology, botany, anthropology, and zoology.

In the preface to volume I Savérien explains the procedure he intends to follow: "I therefore go back to the origin of each particular science or art and follow their progress without abandoning the chronological order. I have thus formed a number of tables, which represent all the efforts made by the human mind to produce the objects that compose them. What is visible here is the state of each science, its birth, its growth, and its degree of perfection. In my treatment I abandon the false roads on which many scientists have become lost; and if departing from them may help to place a truth in a clearer light, I immediately go back to the narrow path which was followed by those who really contributed to the progress of the sciences I deal with. I thus preserve unity and do not abandon the thread of the discoveries" (*Histoire des progrès* [...] dans les sciences exactes, p. VII).

In addition to this general history of the *esprit humain*, Savérien felt compelled to write a specific 'history of the philosophers', in which he devoted more space to the *historia personarum* that he had begun to treat earliest, albeit only in an abridged form. Thus we have the *Histoire des philosophes modernes* (Paris: Brunet, 1760–1761, 4 quarto Vols; subsequent editions: Paris: Brunet, 1760–1769, 7 octavo Vols [this is the edition used here]; Paris: Bleuët, 1773, 8 octavo Vols; as regards an



alleged earlier edition, possibly dated 1740, see Simone, p. 420, note 3). Later on, as a complement to the previous work, the *Histoire des philosophes anciens jusqu'à la renaissance des lettres* was published (Paris: Lacombe, 1770–1772, 5 duodecimo Vols). Another work relating to the history of philosophy is the 'Lettre de M.S. à M. Lacombe, contenant l'histoire des opinions des plus célèbres philosophes sur la fin du monde', which appeared in *Mercure* in September 1773, pp. 158–167.

**2.2.3** During the first half of the eighteenth century, a collection of biographies of modern philosophers, the *Éloges et caractères des philosophes les plus célèbres*, had already been published by Dupont-Bertris (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 151–157). The work does not appear to have been successful, and so it was on good grounds that, in the 'Préface' to his *Histoire des philosophes modernes*, Savérien observed that "this would be the appropriate place to describe the usefulness of this history and to explain that we only have a history of the ancient philosophers, and we completely lack one of the modern philosophers, and that a work presenting the thoughts, systems, and discoveries of the greatest minds could not but constitute an extremely curious and important work for the good of humanity" (*Hist. phil. mod.*, ed. 1760–1769, I, pp. XXXV–XXXVI). The philosophical perspective in which Savérien grounded himself can be seen in the 'Préface' itself, where he states that "reason is a prerogative of man; but he can acquire the perfection of this faculty, which distinguishes him from animals, only by learning the science of using it. This fact was understood by those privileged minds who were also called sages and who called themselves more modestly philosophers, that is to say, lovers of wisdom. Scrupulously attentive to their first sentiments, they observed them and turned them into a chain of simple ideas. With the aid of this, they then proceeded to composite ideas" (I, p. XIV). Savérien thus takes up Locke's distinction between simple and composite ideas, observing that it was thanks to the philosophers that "the human intellect has been analysed or even anatomised and its operations have been developed; and after having carefully examined them, it was given rules in order to be just and sensible [...]. Once they attained this sort of perfection, the philosophers felt that what could contribute to the happiness of man was to occupy his mind by making it clearer, and to calm the tempests which trouble his heart. The study of nature seemed to be the most suitable for this end because it satisfies curiosity, which is a need of the soul, and because it continually brings us close to the supreme Being, which constantly engages us" (I, pp. XV–XVI).

Now that he has identified the 'objects' of philosophy as *Homme* and *Nature*, in accordance with the cultural categories of his time, Savérien can present its fundamental parts: "We give the name Ethics (*Ethice*), or in general Metaphysics, to that which concerns human understanding; we call pure Mathematics all the forms of knowledge that can be acquired without the help of the senses as to size or quantity; and we give the name Physics and Natural History to the science of those things which we can know through the senses" (I, pp. XVI–XVII). In a *Système figuré des philosophes*, which reveals the influence of Bacon's genealogical tree of the sciences as well as the *Encyclopédie*, Savérien represents his table of the sciences in graphical form (I, p. XLII):

VISUAL SYSTEM OF THE PHILOSOPHERS

	{	Metaphysicians [in a strict sense]		
[1] ETHICISTS		Moralists		
[or Metaphysicians in a general sense]		Legislators		
[2] RESTORERS OF THE SCIENCES				
	{	Geometers		{Algebraists
			{	Cosmographers
		Astronomers		Chronologists
[3] MATHEMATICIANS				Hydrographers
		Opticians		
		Mechanics		
[4] PHYSICISTS				
		{CHEMISTS		
	{	Cosmologists		
		Zoologists		
[5] NATURALISTS		Botanists		
		Mineralogists		
		Metallurgists		

In correspondence to this classification of the sciences, Savérien establishes the order of the various “classes of philosophers” to which the history of philosophy, or rather the “history of the philosophers”, must adapt itself: “Metaphysicians should therefore take first place among the philosophers. There follow those great minds (*génies*) who possessed enough wisdom to apply all the faculties of their mind and all the activity of their senses to the study of man and the universe, and whom, in the system illustrated, I call the ‘restorers of the sciences’ [this is clearly a reference to D’Alembert’s *Discours préliminaire* and to Brucker before him]. The mathematicians occupy the third place; the physicists the fourth; and the naturalists the last. This is the order in which the philosophers are placed, and it must be consequently followed when we wish to write their history” (I, p. XIX). The history of philosophy should therefore be understood as all the histories of the separate philosophical disciplines put together, in their concrete and autonomous development, as fulfilled by their most significant representatives: “In the end, it is the sum of these particular Histories which forms the general History of the philosophers” (I, p. XXV).

Savérien is thus aware that the proposed *ordre* “is not that adopted by the historians of eminent men or those of a particular science. They were content to conform to the chronological order, so they wrote the history of all the sages century

by century without distinguishing them according to category”, as they appeared on the historical scene. The negative outcome of this approach is that “in a history thus structured, one will find the life of a metaphysician and his metaphysical reflections. Then the reader will move on to a physicist and his systems; then to a geometer and his discoveries. Now, to begin with, this mass of different subjects will tire the mind and, secondly, it will provide nothing but imperfect notions on each part of philosophy”, while the opposite procedure, that is, to write “the history of the sciences or of eminent men in general, and that of the philosophers in particular, organizing them by class, presents none of these disadvantages. We have, viewed from only one perspective, the history of metaphysics, geometry, physics, and natural history. Then we observe the visible advances made in these sciences, the opinions held by each metaphysician, physicist, naturalist, etc., their disputes, their various reflections concerning the same objects, their reciprocal discoveries, and these lights combined brilliantly illuminate the most abstract subjects” (I, pp. XIX–XXIII).

This different way of structuring the history of philosophy, which is not actually as new and original as the author claimed, is applied in more reduced form in the subsequent *Histoire des philosophes anciens*, in which the “classes of philosophers” are condensed to two: the physicists and mathematicians on one hand and the metaphysicians, moralists, and legislators on the other. In presenting this new historiographical work to the public, Savérien makes a critical allusion to the work by Dutens, which he does not name, but which had caused a stir in a cultural environment which was decisively convinced of the superiority of the “moderns” on a philosophical and scientific plane. “Although a lot has been written on the ancient philosophers, their doctrines, systems, and discoveries are so little known that they are frequently confused with those of the modern philosophers. Every day new works are published which claim to demonstrate that the moderns owe the ancient philosophers all that they have produced” (*Hist. phil. anc.*, I, p. 1; on Dutens’ work, see below, Chap. 3, Introd., a). To avoid the confusion that reigned in the relations between the ancients and the moderns, Savérien thought it appropriate to present all the “riches” of philosophy to the eyes of the learned and the general public, to enable them to distribute their merits justly (I, p. IV).

Another reason can be added, which is explained in the ‘Avis au lecteur’ appended to the fifth and last tome of the *Histoire des philosophes anciens*. Here Savérien quotes a reflection made by André Dacier in the preface to his *Vie de Pythagore*, which appeared in Paris in 1706 and was published again in 1771 in the first two tomes of the *Bibliothèque des anciens philosophes* (see above, p. 70). “Nothing would be more useful to the public and worthier of a learned man”, observed Dacier, “than to trace the lives of all the philosophers of Antiquity with greater order and precision than was done by Diogenes Laertius, who certainly did not provide all that one would expect from such a big subject. In this way, one would see the progress that the reason of a number of selected men has made towards the knowledge of truth, just when the whole earth, excepting a small corner of it, was plunged in darkness. One would also see the eclipses that this truth periodically underwent because it was not strong enough to triumph fully over the illusion and untruth in which the human mind is kept by the contagion of the body” (*Hist. phil.*

*anc.*, V, pp. VII–VIII; cf. A. Dacier, *La vie de Pythagore*, Paris, 1771, I, p. XIII). It might appear strange, in the midst of the age of the *lumières*, to see this passage from Dacier (an enthusiastic Platonist and a partisan of the *anciens*) put forward again, which shows that the obstacle to the progress of reason is not represented by prejudice and superstition, but by the contact of the soul with the body . . . Evidently, Savérien thought he could draw some kind of advantage from the point of view of publicity from the publication of the *Bibliothèque des anciens philosophes*, and he turned to the authoritative testimony of Dacier, even though he could hardly be said to be in harmony with the pro-modern positions presented above.

## 2.2.4 *Histoire des philosophes modernes* *Histoire des philosophes anciens jusqu' à la Renaissance* *des lettres*

**2.2.4.1** The 1760–1769 edition of the *Histoire des philosophes modernes* consists of seven volumes, each of which contains various profiles of philosophers who share the same discipline in common and who are arranged in chronological order. This edition presents an ‘Avertissement’ (I, pp. III–XIII) before the text, while the 1773 edition has an ‘Avis des libraires’ (I, pp. III–VII). The relationship between the various philosophers and the general framework of the disciplines is dealt with in lengthy “preliminary discourses” which function as a link, volume by volume. The first volume, the *Histoire des métaphysiciens* (Erasmus, Hobbes, Nicole, Locke, Spinoza, Malebranche, Bayle, Abbadie, Clarke, and Collins) is introduced by a ‘Préface’ (pp. XIV–XLI) and quotes, at the end, the ‘Lettre de M. François graveur à M.S. sur l’utilité du dessein et sur la gravure dans le goût du crayon’ (pp. 349–362), in which the author explains the sense of the portraits of the various thinkers that he has placed before each biographical profile (“physiognomies are not always signs of the wisdom of men; however, it is probable that the heads of the great minds, since they are organised differently from those of other men, have features proper to them, on which the beauty of their souls is somehow imprinted”: p. 358). Volume II, the *Histoire des moralistes et des législateurs* (Montaigne, Charron, Grotius, La Rochefoucauld, Pufendorf, Cumberland, La Bruyère, Duguet, Wollaston, and Shaftesbury), has an ‘Avertissement’ (pp. I–XIII). The third and fourth volumes bear the same title: *Histoire des Restaurateurs des Sciences* (Ramus, Bacon, Gassendi, Descartes, Pascal, Newton, Leibniz, Halley, Bernoulli, and Wolff). Volume V is the *Histoire des mathématiciens* (Copernicus, Viète, Tycho Brahe, Galileo, Kepler, Fermat, Cassini, Huygens, La Hire, and Varignon); volume VI, the *Histoire des physiciens* (Rohault, Boyle, Hartsoecker, Polinière, Molières, Desaguliers, s’Gravesande, and Musschenbroek); volume VII, the *Histoire des chimistes et des cosmologistes* (Paracelsus, Lefèvre, Kunckel, Burnet, Lémery, Homberg, Maillet, Woodward, and Boerhaave), and the eighth volume, which was added to the 1773 edition, is entitled *Histoire des naturalistes* (Agricola, Gesner,

Aldrovandi, Pierre Belon, Jan Jonston, Martin Lister, Charles Plumier, Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, Stephen Hales, and Réaumur). Each volume contains a list of the philosophers examined.

The five volumes of the *Histoire des philosophes anciens* have no separate titles and the various “preliminary discourses” are replaced, at the beginning of volume I, by a general ‘Discours sur la philosophie ancienne, pour servir d’introduction à cet ouvrage’ (pp. I–CXLIV). The legislators, moralists, and metaphysicians are dealt with in volume I (Lycurgus, Solon, Chilon, Pittacus, Bias, Cleobulus, Aesop, Anacharsis, Epimenides, and Pherecydes), volume II (Xenophanes, Zeno of Elea, Heraclitus, Democritus, Protagoras, Socrates, Euclid of Megara, Plato, Aristippus, and Xenocrates), volume III (Antisthenes, Diogenes, Crates, Zeno of Citium, Chrysippus, Epicurus, Theophrastus, Arcesilaus, Pyrrho, and Carneades), and part of volume IV (Seneca, Epictetus, Apollonius of Tyana, Marcus Aurelius, and Confucius). The second part of volume IV (Pythagoras, Anaxagoras, Leucippus, and Pytheas of Massalia,) and volume V (Aristotle, Archimedes, Hipparchus, Pliny the Elder, Ptolemy, Albert the Great, Roger Bacon, and Arnaldus de Villanova) deal with the “scientists” of Antiquity. This work also presents portraits of each philosopher at the beginning of the relevant profile. At the end of volume V there is a ‘Table des matières’ and an index of names.

**2.2.4.2** The classification of thinkers into groups and the biographical framework relegate the temporal dimension to the background; but, in the various ‘Discours préliminaires’ and the ‘Discours sur la philosophie ancienne’, Savérien provides a periodization and also examines, though in a limited way, some of the ancient and medieval figures who are not included among the philosophers treated separately. He divides the entire span of the history of philosophy into four ages. The first represents the period which extends from the end of the Flood to the moment when the Greeks learnt the first scientific rudiments from the Egyptians. The second age includes Greek and Roman philosophy up to the first invasions of the Goths; this event determines the beginning of the third age, which extends to the *Renaissance des Lettres*, seen as the origin of the modern age. This fourth age follows the succession of pre-eminent figures, from Ramus to Bacon and Gassendi, from Descartes to Pascal, and from Leibniz to Newton. Following the historiographical tradition of the Enlightenment, the subdivision of the history of philosophy into four periods “is adopted as a constant framework with the explicit object of using the primitive age, as well as the classical and medieval ages, better to highlight the modern age, which is made to start *depuis la renaissance des lettres*” (Simone, p. 423). These four periods can be reduced to two broad domains: ancient philosophy, which includes the medieval age and extends up to the rebirth of letters towards the middle of the fourteenth century (*Hist. phil. anc.*, V, p. 212); and modern philosophy.

**2.2.4.3** In his overall evaluation of ancient philosophy, Savérien takes up the themes of the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, siding decidedly with the moderns. He launches into a polemic against those who cling to the ancient period, in which “one should not expect to find the seed or principle of all the discoveries

we owe to the modern philosophers”; indeed, “only someone who is inexpert in metaphysics would think that the metaphysics of Locke and Malebranche resemble that of Aristotle; and only someone very inexpert in geometry would believe that the most difficult problems in this science were resolved by Thales, Pythagoras, Archimedes, or Apollonius, who knew neither algebra nor transcendent geometry [...]. The fact that the works of the ancient philosophers contain some ideas which the modern philosophers have used does not mean that we have to accuse them of theft or plagiarism. Is Newton’s glory [...] affected by the fact that Empedocles had some indefinite ideas concerning the system of gravitation, if these ideas were devoid of the proof necessary to support them?” (*Hist. phil. anc.*, I, pp. CXXII and CXXVII–CXXIX). The importance of ancient culture is therefore reduced: the highly celebrated superiority of the ancients simply derives from the “great distance between them and us, which can make them seem greater than they are and give them a prestige they would not have if we were their contemporaries” (*Hist. phil. anc.*, V, p. 2). The overall judgement on ancient thought is thus not very positive: “morals is the science which was particularly cultivated by the ancient philosophers because it is philosophy properly speaking. They are almost all moralists; there are very few metaphysicians, dialecticians, or logicians among the ancients, and even fewer mathematicians and physicists, so the class of the moralists will occupy several volumes in this history of the ancient philosophers, while that of the mathematicians and physicists will be contained in only one volume” (*Hist. phil. anc.*, I, pp. CXXXII–CXXXIII).

Within this general framework, the treatment of the ancient philosophers, although extensive, is something of a lacklustre compilation, in which the commonplaces of Enlightenment historiography are preserved alongside more traditional theories. The author, for example, does not fail to include the theological perspective concerning the origin of philosophy: explicitly referring to Brucker and to “several other historians”, he declares that philosophy (“which was born together with the world”, since men were immediately impressed by the marvels of nature) found its early exponents in three wise men of the Old Testament, Solomon, Daniel, and Job, to whom we owe “some discoveries in the fields of metaphysics, morals, and physics. These discoveries”, observes Savérien, “constitute the first stones in the great edifice of philosophy, and in raising this edifice I could not abstain from laying its foundations; but those who laid these first stones were not simple men: it was the work of God himself” (*Hist. phil. anc.*, I, ‘Avis important’, unnumbered page; ‘Discours sur la philosophie ancienne’, p. v). As for how the Egyptians came to discover the principles of geometry and astronomy, this remains an unresolved question: where did this “sublime knowledge” that the other barbaric peoples did not possess come from? Raising the same issue with regard to Pythagoras, Savérien quotes Dacier’s theory, whereby the science of the Egyptians depends on contact with the chosen people, but he seems reluctant to accept it: instead of attempting a historical and cultural explanation, as was usual in the period, he limits himself to formulating general considerations on the ‘Egyptian miracle’ (“We therefore agree that it is not known how it happened that many centuries of ignorance were suddenly followed by a century of knowledge. This was undoubtedly a happy inspiration of

nature, which gave rise in addition to the most marvellous geniuses of Antiquity”, such as Pythagoras: *Hist. phil. anc.*, IV, pp. 227–228).

The influence of Dacier is revealed again in the presentation of Plato as a prelude to the Christian doctrines: the Athenian philosopher was “really great” in theology and morals; he posited a single God who created the world from nothing and then gave it order; the epithet “divine” was fully deserved because his principles “led naturally to the Christian religion” (*Hist. phil. anc.*, II, pp. 269, 285, 293, 296; Savérien, however, does not accept the theory that Plato knew the Trinity). He devotes the greatest number of pages to Plato (85), followed by Socrates (72), Aristotle (59), Seneca (47), Diogenes the Cynic, and Marcus Aurelius (43). Yet his reverent respect for Dacier does not prevent him from emphasising the deficiencies of the divine Plato in the field of physics, in a polemic against Dutens: he “drowned the world in ideas, just as Aristotle, his pupil and rival, drowned the sciences in words”. Savérien also gives us an image of Aristotle presented from a Lockean perspective, thus indicating the prevailing philosophical atmosphere (“Aristotle discovered the main sources of the art of reasoning, discovered the root of the thoughts of men, related these thoughts to one another, brought them back to a definite point, and finally wished to know and fix the limits of the human intellect”: *Hist. phil. anc.*, I, pp. XC and CXXIII–CXXIV).

In his presentation of the ancient philosophers we can also see some more personal elements, which reflect the technical and scientific education of the former nautical engineer. This is the case of the *réflexion* on the intellectual attitude of Socrates, who “did not hold the mathematical sciences in higher esteem than physics; nevertheless”, objects Savérien, “it is commonly acknowledged that it is impossible to devote one’s mind successfully to any field of study if one ignores this science. It is not enough to say that man must only try to know himself in order to enjoy perfect happiness: it is necessary to show how he can do this without a guide, without a method, and without resources; how he can distinguish truth from error, good from evil, if he lacks the *cachet* or the criterion of truth. Now, the method of the mathematical sciences is the only one which provides this criterion [...]. Natural philosophy is in no way a superfluous philosophy, it is a necessary philosophy” (*Hist. phil. anc.*, II, pp. 119–120; Savérien had previously observed that only the physicist, who is a “quiet spectator” of natural phenomena, is capable of dispelling that fear of these phenomena which – together with “desire” and “hope” – Socrates considered to be at the origin of passions. As regards an analogous criticism of Socrates’ position, formulated in the same period by the marquis de Chastellux, see above, p. 68–69).

Savérien’s judgement on the classical period still admits some positive value; it becomes extremely negative, however, with regard to the *obscurité* and the *dérailson* of medieval culture. In this period, convinced that “nothing could be added to what they [the ancients] had published, the only concern was to comment on them [...]. The mind was used as an ornament: cultivating one’s own thought and providing it with impetus was forgotten. This gave rise to pusillanimity and discouragement. In this way the powers of the human mind wasted away insensibly because they were not put into use” (*Hist. phil. mod.*, I, p. XXIII). In this darkness, however,

Savérien identifies some flashes of enlightenment: the cultural activity promoted by Charlemagne through the wise Alcuin, and the scientific efforts made by the Arabs (who “cultivated almost all the sciences in a period when the other nations stagnated in the deepest ignorance”: *Hist. phil. anc.*, III, p. XIII), followed in the West only by Raymond Lull and Arnaldus de Villanova, to whom we should add Albert the Great, Roger Bacon, Peurbach, and Regiomontanus. Savérien credits Roger Bacon with the ability and courage, which not even the Arabs had shown, to be the first to abandon the ‘guide’ of Aristotle in order to “try to open up a new path to the philosophers of his time, but he was not heeded [ . . . ]. The veil of prejudice in favour of Aristotle had to be ripped away in order to learn the value of his works” (*Hist. phil. anc.*, I, pp. CXIX–CXX; V, pp. 165–168).

With his radical condemnation of the Middle Ages, Savérien tries to polemically emphasise the break with the Renaissance. However, he does not elaborate on the precise origins of the *Renaissance des lettres* and therefore attributes the end of the darkness of the Middle Ages to a ‘rebellion’ of the *plus clair-voyants* against the enslavement of ignorance, thanks to the decisive contribution of the learned Greek exiles in Italy. But in this restricted circle of enlightened thinkers who supported profound renewal, no one seemed to be capable of opposing the Peripatetic systems, until “Providence produced an ardent man endowed with great wisdom, who dared to contradict the Scholastics firmly and attempted to bring them back to reason and experience. This man was Petrus Ramus” (*Hist. phil. mod.*, III, p. XXVIII). Although he had no personal doctrine, Ramus put forward a new orientation in research which can be summarised in three main points: “1. Not to follow Aristotle’s philosophy and to establish the sciences on principles recognised by reasoning alone, with no respect for any authority. 2. To study the mathematical sciences starting from Euclid’s *Elements*, instead of being content with some vague knowledge of the celestial sphere and practical geometry, as was customary in his time. 3. To associate the study of eloquence together with that of philosophy” (III, p. 34).

Following the line of the “restorers of the sciences”, Ramus (to whom Savérien devotes 36 pages) is followed by Francis Bacon (70 pages) who, “not satisfied with criticising the doctrine of the schools, dared to lay the foundations of a new philosophy. His lively imagination and admirable wisdom revealed to him all the knowledge acquired by man”. Savérien summarises Bacon’s thought as follows: “The human intellect is composed of three faculties: memory, imagination, and judgement or reason. History relates to memory, poetry to imagination, and philosophy to reason. History deals with particular facts which happened in different periods. Poetry is a fake history [ . . . ]. Philosophy does not consider particular things, nor does it consider impressions as such, but the knowledge we derive from them” (III, pp. 37 and 75–76). The moral implications of the study of these disciplines induce Bacon to observe that “the study of history makes man cautious; poetry makes him spiritual; the mathematical sciences make him subtle; natural philosophy makes him profound; morals makes him wise; dialectics makes him sensible; and rhetoric makes him eloquent; *abeunt studia in mores*. There are no natural defects which cannot be corrected by studying” (III, pp. 82–83).



But it is only with Descartes (who occupies the greatest number of pages: 128) that there is a transition from the phase of criticism and rejection of the past to a new way of proceeding in the sphere of science; indeed, Descartes, “who was endowed with prodigious imagination, profound as well as stable judgement, and a wisdom that was almost supernatural or unknown before then, applied his deep insight to all the objects of human knowledge and submitted them, with no exception, to rules and laws” (III, p. 192). Above all, Savérien strives to grasp the mechanistic aspect of Descartes’ thought, with its relevant mathematical and physical implications, as we can see in the case of the body: “Now, an easy way to reveal its construction is to suppose that our body is nothing other than a vital breath or an earthly machine formed by God to make it as similar to us as possible: in such a way that he not only gives the outside of it the colour and shape of our limbs, but also provides it with all the internal parts necessary to make it walk, eat, breath, and finally imitate all those functions which we imagine to proceed from matter and to depend exclusively on the arrangement of the organs” (III, p. 298).

Descartes was the first to bring the modern age to a constructive turning point, and Savérien observes that “nature [...] certainly did not exhaust herself in giving birth to Descartes. As if wishing to compensate for that long period of rest in which it had produced only ordinary men, it formed almost at the same time two sublime geniuses, who infinitely extended the sphere of human knowledge. The first was an Englishman: the great Newton. The second was born in Germany: the illustrious Leibniz” (IV, p. XLV). Savérien recognises Newton and Descartes as the greatest philosophers to have appeared during the “rebirth of the sciences”, even though their methodologies seem to be in conflict. In order to judge the validity of the two methods he refers to Fontenelle, in the fashion of Solomon: “The evident principles of the former do not always lead him to phenomena as they are; and phenomena do not always lead the latter to sufficiently evident principles” (IV, p. 5 n. 2). Newton’s methodology is described as follows: “Wishing to proceed with certainty, he refused to establish any principle and to formulate any supposition. He consulted Nature itself, followed its operations carefully and aimed at discovering its secrets only by means of selected and repeated experiences. As he felt great confidence in this way of proceeding, he decided that it was not possible to admit objections to an evident experience unless they were deduced from metaphysical reflections. Always on his guard against conceit, he understood that, in studying nature, patience was just as necessary as intelligence” (IV, p. II).

The aim of Leibniz’ speculation is the exercise of reason, an aim considered indispensable for man’s happiness; and it is precisely in relation to this that his composite system can be understood: “He started first of all by asking what the attributes of the Divinity should be. From this knowledge he moved on to that of the Universe. From the wisdom and goodness of the Creator he concluded that good and evil are necessarily involved in the composition of the best of possible worlds. Hence he learned to submit himself to the decrees of providence and to see at a glance all the misfortunes which might happen to him. Once free of all fear, he thought only of enjoying the pleasures of the mind, which are brought about by learning” (IV, pp. 70–71). Leibniz and Newton made several discoveries in

the fields of mathematics and metaphysics which were greatly developed by three of their pupils: Wolff, Bernoulli, and Halley. Among the restorers of the sciences, Pascal occupies a prominent position due to his reflection on the human condition: man “is but a thinking reed, the most feeble thing in nature [. . .]. A vapour, a drop of water suffices to kill him”. In particular, Savérien underlines two modes of knowledge present in Pascal: one is intended to “penetrate the consequences of principles keenly and profoundly, this is the spirit of finesse; the other embraces a great number of principles without mixing them up, this is the spirit of geometry” (III, pp. 348 and 356).

Next to these multi-faceted geniuses, who are essential for the development of the modern age and the affirmation of *raison*, Savérien places those figures who distinguished themselves in the separate disciplines, defining first the structure proper to each discipline. As regards metaphysics, for example, he declares that “in order to leave nothing to chance, I have reduced all the sciences of metaphysics to its principal objects, which are: 1. The analysis of man, his passions and his mistakes, considered both in particular and in society; this creates a picture of humanity that includes the foundations of all laws; 2. Nature and the faculties of the human mind; the origin, progress, and extension of its knowledge; 3. The art of thinking and reasoning and directing all the operations of the mind; 4. The use of reason in all the events of life; 5. The art of knowing truth by avoiding the illusions and mistakes to which man is prone in the search for it; 6. Finally, the nature and attributes of the Creator and those of beings in general” (*Hist. phil. mod.*, III, p. LVIII).

Having defined the conceptual framework of metaphysics, Savérien chooses those figures who analysed the various fields most successfully: thus Erasmus is distinguished for his subtlety in describing man, a quality even revealed by his physical aspect (“Erasmus was short, had a light complexion, mild, blue eyes, a gentle voice with clear pronunciation”). Savérien particularly admires Erasmus’ major work, *The Praise of Folly*: “He was endowed with a great capacity for judgement, much erudition, and he knew the human heart perfectly. This knowledge shines out especially in *The Praise of Folly*. It is an original work, which still today preserves all its splendour” (III, pp. 24–25).

Hobbes is the thinker who studied the principles which unite men and hold society together most effectively: “Man is naturally evil: he does not love his fellows and seeks society only for his personal interest [. . .]. Men gathering in assembly have declared that all that which is not contrary to right reason is good; namely all that which is necessary for the preservation of each individual is good; and all that which tends to destruction is evil. This is the first principle of natural law. It was therefore important for this law to be respected in order for society to be able to develop”. As for the accusations of irreligion aimed at the *De cive*, Savérien observes that this work “has some flaws if we analyse it; but it constitutes a solid and well-concluded whole if we consider it in its entirety and take it as a pure system containing very sound and useful principles” (III, pp. 57–59).

As for Bayle, who is placed among the metaphysicians due to his interest in reasoning, Savérien observes that “he undoubtedly abused his talents at times: he erred more than any other author, I admit; but how many marvellous things have

we learnt from this philosopher? Was there ever a greater dialectician? We would lose everything if, just because of a few errors in a book, we were to condemn it, regardless of the truths it contains". For Savérien, who asserted that sound knowledge derived from the good use of reason, the weak point of Bayle's thought proves to be his scepticism: "He affirms, in general, that human reason is more capable of rejecting and destroying than of demonstrating and constructing" (III, pp. 234 and 267).

Considerable importance is attached to Locke, in particular because of his ability to go beyond scepticism and inert dogmatism by means of a new approach to the theory of knowledge: "To prevent these misfortunes it was therefore necessary to examine carefully the power of the intellect; to discover how far its knowledge can reach; to define what it can know and what exceeds its intelligence; in a word, to really make its nature known by considering all its objects in relation to the proportion they have with its faculty" (III, pp. 122–123). Savérien then provides a detailed presentation of Locke's thought with reference to the nature of the intellect, the sources of its knowledge, and the analysis of sensible and supersensible experience. Locke affirms that "the observations we elaborate concerning external, sensible objects and concerning the inner operations of our souls, which we perceive and on which we ourselves reflect, provide our minds with the materials for all their thoughts. These are the two sources from which the ideas we have or we can have naturally derive" (III, p. 47). Once he has defined the concept of idea, Savérien analyses the principles of Locke's logic: "We thus conclude that our thoughts and reasonings have no other object than our ideas, which are the only thing we contemplate or we can contemplate and that it is therefore certain that these ideas guide all the knowledge we have. We give the name knowledge to the perception of the connection and suitability, or of the opposition and unsuitability, which exist between two ideas of ours. This suitability or unsuitability can be reduced to four kinds, namely: i) identity or difference; ii) relation; iii) coexistence or necessary connection; and iv) real existence" (III, p. 156).

Using the same approach he had previously adopted for metaphysics, Savérien affirms that, as far as the philosophy of law is concerned, essential contributions were made by Grotius with his law of war and peace, Pufendorf with his law of the nature of peoples, and Cumberland with his philosophical foundation of the principles of law. Contributions to mathematics were made by Copernicus, who was the first to study the system of the earth in clear numerical terms; Viète, who gave a new form to universal arithmetic; Galileo with the application of mathematics to problems in the field of mechanics; Kepler with the discovery of infinity in geometry; Tycho Brahe, Cassini, Huygens, La Hire, and Varignon with new methods of calculus for dealing with astronomical problems. Thanks to Rohault, physics – which before the *Renaissance des lettres* was a *science de mots* – began to make use of reason and experience; a significant contribution was also made by Hartsoecker, while Desaguliers stressed the importance of experiments in theoretical physics. By providing a clear description of his experiments in alchemy, Paracelsus was the initiator of modern chemistry, while Lefèvre established its first theoretical principles and Kunckel applied it profitably to the various arts.

Among the naturalists, those who made important discoveries were Agricola, with his studies on the behaviour of metals, Réaumur, with his invention of new materials like porcelain, and Hales with his physical applications to the natural world.

**2.2.4.4** From the point of view of its methodology, Savérien's work is characterised by its claim to provide a "true" history of philosophers thanks to its organization by classes and its use, within each class, of a rigorous chronological order that replaces the traditional sequence of the schools (*Hist. phil. anc.*, I, pp. CXXXIII–CXXXIV; II, pp. 1–2). This innovative intent, however, does not go beyond a general classification of the philosophers, within which the *discours préliminaires* serve as the background and connecting framework for the individual profiles or 'oval portraits', in which the account of the life and thought of each philosopher is occasionally enlivened by a number of *réflexions*, following a custom typical of French historiography. At times Savérien goes so far as to offer an interpretative discussion, as in *Hist. phil. anc.*, II, p. 8, where, in presenting Xenophanes, he establishes a comparison between the theories of Bayle and those of Deslandes. With this approach, Savérien intends to distance himself both from Brucker's work (although he acknowledges that it is "a very erudite book containing an immense amount of research and almost always reasonable criticism": *Hist. phil. mod.*, I, pp. XXXIII–XXXIV) and from biographical works, generally too lengthy and detailed ("Those who wrote various volumes on the life of one of these philosophers were only able to compile them by providing details unconnected to the acts and works of that philosopher. These digressions occupy more than three quarters of such works and do not concern the philosopher the author intended to inform the reader on": *Hist. phil. mod.*, V, p. XXXIII; on a similar intolerance of verbose biographies in Voltaire, see above, Chap. 2, Introd., b).

In his historiographical work, Savérien makes use of multiple sources and modern literature on the history of philosophy (in the case of Epicurus, for example, he uses Batteux's *Morale d'Épicure*, but the works of Rapin, even though they were produced almost a century earlier, are also taken into consideration on various occasions). At the beginning of each profile he indicates the bibliography he has referred to, limiting himself to mentioning the main works "so as not to display too much erudition" (*Hist. phil. mod.*, I, pp. XXVII–XXVIII; see also pp. III–IV, where he mentions as his major sources of information on the modern writers Fontenelle's *Éloges*, Nicéron, Chauffepié [the author of the *Nouveau dictionnaire historique et critique*, 1750–1756, which was intended to continue Bayle's work], and Brucker). As for ancient historiography, Savérien admits the importance of Laertius as a source, although he describes it as "an unfaithful guide with a tendency to get lost", and observes that "it is to be hoped that a similar [guide] will become available for the history of the philosophers who followed on from one another from the Greeks up to the Renaissance. For these thinkers we only have memoirs and a few individual lives", even though in modern historiography "a multitude of authors have written about the ancient philosophers, to the extent that the German Johann Jonsius managed to compile a considerable volume simply by filling it with the names of these authors and with the list of their works [...]. If the writings of the

authors mentioned in this compilation are added to the works by Stanley, Deslandes, Brucker, and to the memoirs on the ancient philosophers by the *Académie Royale des Inscriptions*, we have abundant sources which can form a complete history of the philosophers". This is precisely what Savérien believes he has done, and in this way he too indulges in the temptation – so common among historians of philosophy – to stress the alleged novelty of his own work: "This is precisely the work I am announcing today to the public, the first volume of which is now published. I dare to say that literature and consequently the education of man lacked this work; but I do not know whether I can flatter myself in having satisfied them in this regard" (*Hist. phil. anc.*, I, pp. CXXXVI–CXXXVIII).

**2.2.5** The *Histoire des philosophes modernes* attracted public attention even before it was published. Indeed, Grimm pointed out the project as early as August 1759, but his interest – in accordance with the taste of his time – seemed to be directed more at the new engravings by François than at Savérien's treatment, which is presented as "an *abrégé* of the life and systems of each philosopher" added to a gallery of portraits (*Corr. litt.*, IV, p. 134). Nevertheless, when the first volume of the work appeared, Grimm praised Savérien for the "simplicity" and "impartiality" of his account and seized the opportunity to make an ironical comment against the party of the *dévots*, the adversaries of the *philosophes*: "He [Savérien] will thus please *les honnêtes gens*; as for those who are devout, it is a different matter. It would seem that the reverend father Berthier, a tedious journalist from the Trévoux, was very shocked by the fact that M. Savérien dared say that Bayle was an honourable man. If the fashion of persecution endures in France, we may delude ourselves that very soon a decree will appear that labels all past, present, and future philosophers as scoundrels, bandits, arsonists, and gallows birds" (*Corr. litt.*, IV, p. 248; on the polemic directed against Bayle by the Jesuit Berthier, cf. Rétat, pp. 181, 193, 314; it is worth noting that, in Rétat's work, Savérien is only mentioned in the bibliography).

The review of volume II was less favourable to either Savérien (who is considered to be a philosopher of modest stature) or François, who is accused of disappointing the public's expectations because in most cases he replaced the portraits of the foreign philosophers with allegorical patterns. "One would have to be an accomplished philosopher", observes Grimm firmly, "to trace the history of so many philosophers with a certain superiority. This is not the case of M. Savérien. His merit can only consist of having produced a faithful and precise work" (*Corr. litt.*, IV, p. 418; but see also VI, p. 21, where, on the subject of the publication of volume IV, he remarks ironically that Savérien "is a rather flat writer, but we should nevertheless concede him the privilege of writing history only for people of spirit, since they need nothing but facts, which they find in M. Savérien; as to reflections, they are perfectly capable of managing on their own").

The observations which appeared in contemporary journals are more detailed. In reviewing volume V of the *Hist. phil. mod.*, which is devoted to mathematicians, for example, the *Journal des savants* judged the work to be interesting, but observed that "the way in which the author reports the discoveries suggests that he did not read the original works and that he is not skilled enough in the mathematical sciences

to be able to assign to each branch those fruitful and important discoveries which immortalise the great men" (JS, February 1767, p. 111). The theory of the novelty and superiority of modern with respect to ancient philosophy was objected to by the *Journal encyclopédique* in a very analytical review. "Today it is fashionable to insult the ancients; our historian philosopher (*Historien Philosophe*) does not avoid this. According to him, nothing is more pitiful than their metaphysics [...]. Can we believe that the lights and principles of the moderns belong so exclusively to them that there is no trace of them in Antiquity?". Here the reviewer compares the doctrines of the Greeks and Saint Augustine with the theories elaborated by Descartes and Malebranche, the "sophisms of modern sceptics", Collins' objections to human freedom, and even Leibniz's theory of the monad and pre-established harmony, revealing an evolutionary and disenchanting conception of the history of philosophy, understood as an uninterrupted series of great "hypotheses" and "dreams" invariably destined to be surpassed over the course of time: "In a word, the ancient metaphysicians were not so little enlightened as we usually imagine. If their ideas have not come down to us in all their extent and with the precision we would desire, this is due to the fact that, century by century, they have been effaced by happier systems, and that only a few remains have been able to avoid total decay, enough, however, to allow us to evaluate their intellectual strength. The same will happen to innate ideas, monads etc., when other great geniuses come and, with other dreams, push into oblivion these brilliant hypotheses which have been so greatly praised" (JE, 1760, II/3, pp. 9–11).

This review is also interesting for the criticisms it makes of Savérien's definitions of metaphysics, mathematics, physics, and natural history, which are judged to be imprecise. In particular, the review objects to the classification of Erasmus among the "metaphysicians", to the detriment of other more worthy thinkers, such as La Mothe le Vayer and Antoine Arnauld: *The Praise of Folly* (described as a "clever joke" containing nothing but "a refined criticism of our morals") has nothing to do with metaphysics, that is to say, with "those profound and reasoned works that constitute the glory of the human mind" (p. 18). However, Erasmus' biography must have aroused considerable interest because a century later it was used in the *Brevi memorie della vita d'Erasmus tratte dalla storia de' filosofi del Savérien* which was prefaced to a reprint of the Italian translation [1805] of the *Praise* entitled *Una gabbia di matti è il mondo tutto, ovvero elogio della pazzia* (Livorno: G.B. Rossi, 1863). But even Nicole's *Logique* and Abbadie's *Traité de l'art de se connaître soi-même* are not considered to be strictly metaphysical works as they concern logic and morals, respectively. This need for a "greater correctness in the choice of his heroes" is echoed in the final judgement on volume I of the *Histoire des philosophes modernes* (JE, 1760, III/1, p. 9; III/2, p. 38).

The *Histoire des philosophes anciens* was also reviewed in the *Journal encyclopédique*, but quite probably not by the same reviewer, as here the view on the relationship between the ancients and moderns is totally reversed and agrees with that of Savérien. Indeed, the work is presented as a helpful means to confute "some enthusiastic admirers of the ancients", who stubbornly defend "the untenable paradox" which maintains that the moderns plagiarised the ancients and are indebted to them for their greatest discoveries (JE, 1772, I/1, pp. 5–7). But the most interesting

review from the point of view of historiographical methodology appeared in Italy, in the *Efemeridi letterarie di Roma*. The ‘Discours’ prefaced to the *Hist. phil. anc.* is judged to be “the best thing in the whole work”, and the work in its entirety is considered as rather mediocre compared with the *Hist. phil. mod.*, which seems to have been “compiled with greater wisdom and discretion”. According to the reviewer, the presentations of Socrates and Plato are “languid and cold”, despite the vast amount of material used: “We dare say that Diogenes Laertius is not as languid, he who is usually so deficient and superficial”. At this point, the criticism becomes stronger and more detailed: “So, why did *signor* Savérien not avail himself of Aristotle’s works in presenting the systems of the ancient investigators of nature? For in a few lines that great man understands many more things than Laertius in his endless idle talk. And if Aristotle frightened *signor* Savérien because of his difficulty, he might have turned to the eminent efforts made by father Gerdil, who in examining the Ionic and the Italic sect explains brilliantly and with utmost clarity that which the extremely sharp Stagirite condensed into a small bundle and expressed in almost oracular style”. In conclusion, “anyone who has some faint knowledge of the history of philosophy will find nothing new in these lives [...], and the whole work [...] has no other merit than being clear, precise, and methodical, something in which French writers succeed wonderfully and deserve to be taken as a model and example by others” (ELR, 1772, I, p. 151; on Gerdil see below, Sect. 5.4; on the recognition of Aristotle as a source for the pre-Socratics in Germany, see below, Sects. 9.2.4.4 and 9.5.4.4).

Let us close this survey with two brief but qualified judgements. The first, of a literary character, is by the abbé Sabatier de Castres, who finds Savérien’s histories of philosophy full of “useless digressions” and “tiny details”, written in a style that is neither correct nor elegant. The second, more strictly historiographical, is by Degérando, who observes that, compared with the *Éloges* by Dupont-Bertris quoted above, Savérien’s treatment of the modern philosophers is elaborated “at greater length but with rare negligence”. The judgements of his contemporaries, though based on different ideological positions, agree therefore in pointing out the modest level of Savérien’s historiographical work. However, the *Histoire des philosophes anciens* and the *Histoire des philosophes modernes* (to which we should add the philosophical parts of the *Histoire des progrès de l’esprit humain dans les sciences intellectuelles*, which has not been examined here so as to avoid repetition) represent the most extensive and organic historiographical work to be published in France in the eighteenth century. These works are the outcome of the scholarly efforts of an ‘amateur’ coming, just like Deslandes, from the executive and technical ranks of the navy, and are much more complete and substantiated than Deslandes’ *Histoire critique de la philosophie*, though they lack its ‘critical’ attitude.

**2.2.6** On Savérien’s life and works: ME, 1805, IV, pp. 151–152 (brief obituary); BUAM, LI, pp. 222–223; Cioranescu, pp. 1652–1653.

On the reception of his two *Histoires*: *Corr. litt.*, IV, p. 134 (15th August, 1759); p. 248 (15th June, 1760); p. 418 (1st June, 1761); VI, p. 21 (15th June, 1764); JE, 1760, II/3, pp. 3–28; III/1, pp. 9–27; III/2, pp. 26–38; 1761, V/2, pp. 3–24; V/3,

pp. 17–39; 1762, VIII/3, pp. 36–60; 1763, I/1, pp. 82–100; 1764, II/3, pp. 3–35; 1766, VI/1, pp. 38–52; 1768, VI/1, pp. 52–66; VI/2, pp. 19–32; 1772, I/1, pp. 3–21; I/2, pp. 207–223; JS, 1767, I, pp. 106–111; 1770, I, pp. 17–22 and 340–346; MT, 1763, I, pp. 43–55 and 296–307; 1764, I, pp. 668–681 and 797–814; 1766, I, pp. 197–223; 1768, I, pp. 234–251; 1769, I, pp. 478–502; 1772, I, pp. 521–543; ELR, 1772, I, pp. 150–151; A. Sabatier de Castres, *Les trois siècles de la littérature Française* . . . (The Hague, 1778<sup>3</sup>; 1st ed.: Amsterdam, 1772), IV, pp. 172–173; F.N. Steinacher, *Grundriss der philosophischen Geschichte* (Würzburg, 1774), p. 295 (where the *Hist. phil. mod.* is mentioned); Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, p. 134; G. Tiraboschi, *Storia della letteratura Italiana* (Milan, 1822–1826), I, pp. 90 and 92.

On criticism: B. Bessmertny, ‘Savérien, historien des sciences’, *Archeion*, XV (1933), pp. 369–378; A. Mieli, ‘L’historien (!) Savérien connaissait-il les choses dont il parlait?’, *Archeion*, XXI (1938), pp. 105–108 (on pp. 106–108 the author quotes a passage from G.H.F. Nesselmann, *Die Algebra der Griechen* (Berlin, 1842), pp. 19–23, where the figure of Savérien is clearly defined); Vernière, pp. 333–334 and 629; Simone, pp. 420–427; Garin, *La storia “critica”*, pp. 269–273; Braun, pp. 158–159; S. Moravia, *La scienza dell’uomo nel Settecento* (Bari, 1970), p. 79; Dagen, pp. 59–61 and 591; A. Kühne and, G. Metze, ‘The early Copernican biographies and portraits’, *Organon*, XXXV (2006), pp. 17–43; J. De Vet, ‘Bayle in Two Periodicals of the Late Eighteenth Century: His Presence in *L’année Littéraire* and *Journal Encyclopédique*’, in *Pierre Bayle (1647–1706), «le Philosophe de Rotterdam»: Philosophy, Religion and Reception*, W. Van Bunge and H. Bots eds. (Leiden, 2008), pp. 231–252 (224–225).

## 2.3 Charles Batteux (1713–1780)

### *Histoire des causes premières, ou Exposition sommaire des pensées des philosophes sur les principes des êtres*

Laura Scarduelli\*

**2.3.1** The scholar who is regarded as one of the fathers of modern aesthetics, and whom we examine here in his lesser-known role as a historian of philosophy, was born in Alland’huy, near Reims, on 6th May, 1713. He studied in the town seminary before embarking on an ecclesiastical career. In 1734, at a young age, he started to teach rhetoric at the college of Reims University. The abbé d’Olivet called him to Paris in 1740 and procured him the chair of *humanités* at the Collège de Lisieux and then the chair of rhetoric at the Collège de Navarre. In 1750 it was Batteux – and not Condillac or Diderot, the two most outstanding philosophers of the time – who was appointed to the chair of Greek and Latin philosophy at the Collège Royal, a position which had become vacant after the death of *abbé* Terrasson. This

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\*Revised and updated by Gregorio Piaia.



appointment was supported by the minister d'Argenson, who a year earlier had sent Diderot into a 3 month confinement in Vincennes because of the publication of *Lettre sur les aveugles*. It was probably this event which provoked Diderot's polemical attitude against Batteux and his aesthetic and grammatical theories, an attitude which manifested itself in particular in the *Lettre sur les sourds et muets* (1751). Batteux began his lectures at the *Collège royal* with the lecture *De gustu veterum in studiis litterarum retinendo*, of a classicistic tenor, and he continued to teach until 1773, when the position of chair of ancient philosophy was abolished and replaced by that of French literature. From 1754 he was a member of the *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, and in 1761 he was also admitted to the *Académie Française*, where he delivered a speech of welcome to Condillac, when, after the death of d'Olivet (1768), he too was admitted to the *Académie*. He died in Paris on 14th July, 1780.

**2.3.2** The abbé Batteux's vast production developed in two different directions: in the literary and aesthetic field and in the field of the history of philosophy. After some early poetry in Latin, he became a literary critic with the *Parallèle de la "Henriade" et du "Lutrin"* (Paris, 1746). In that same year he published his most important and famous work, *Les Beaux-Arts réduits à un même principe* (Paris: Durand, 1746; following editions: 1747, 1753, 1773 [repr. Geneva, 1969]; ed. J.R. Manton, Paris, 1989); German transl. by Philipp Ernst Bertram (Gotha, 1751) and by Johann Adolf Schlegel (Leipzig, 1751, 1759<sup>2</sup>, 1770<sup>3</sup>); the English transl. of some pages can be found in *Aesthetics*, ed. by S. Feagin and P. Maynard (Oxford, 1997, pp. 102–104). In this short treatise, the author's aesthetic intellectualism becomes manifest in his attempt to relate all arts and all aesthetic rules to a unitary principle which is clear and evident in a Cartesian sense: the imitation of nature, which for Batteux means "imitation de la belle Nature", namely a selection of the best parts in order to form a whole which is more perfect than nature itself ("In short, an imitation that allows us to see nature not as it is in itself, but as it might be, and how it might be conceived of by means of the mind": *Les Beaux-Arts*, ed. 1746, I, 3, p. 24; see also, in Ch. 3 of Part II, pp. 66–75, a short outline of the "history of taste", whose "revolutions" are presented in accordance with the periods of the general history of culture and philosophy).

Despite Diderot's criticisms, Batteux's theories were accepted in the entries on aesthetics in the *Encyclopédie* and they enjoyed great success in Germany, where they were used by Kant himself in his *Critique of Judgement*. Moreover, the treatise *Les Beaux-Arts*, together with the *Cours de belles-lettres distribué par exercices* (Paris, 1747–1748) and the *De la construction oratoire* (Paris, 1763), was included in the *Cours de belles-lettres, ou Principes de la littérature* (Paris, 1764), which was re-printed and translated several times up until the middle of the nineteenth century. This area of study also includes the French translation of Horace (1750), *Les quatre poétiques d'Aristote, d'Horace, de Vida* [the Cremona poet Marco Girolamo Vida, author of *Poeticorum libri tres* (Rome, 1527)], *de Despréaux* [Boileau], *avec les traductions et des remarques* (Paris, 1771), and a posthumous work written in defence of the French language against Latin and Greek: *Traité de l'arrangement des mots, traduit du grec de Denys d'Halicarnasse, avec des réflexions sur la*

*langue Française comparée avec la langue Grecque et la tragédie de Polyeucte, de P. Corneille, avec des remarques* (Paris, 1788). Batteux also contributed to the *Cours d'études à l'usage des élèves de l'École royale militaire* (Paris, 1777–1780) and edited the first volumes of the monumental *Mémoires concernant l'histoire, les sciences, les arts, les moeurs, les usages, etc. des Chinois: par les missionnaires de Pékin* (Paris, 1776–1789).

His work on the history of philosophy was closely related to his activity as an Academy member. Batteux inaugurated his participation at the meetings of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* with the memoir *Conjectures sur le système des homéométries, ou parties similaires, d'Anaxagore*, which he presented after Easter 1754, followed – on 19th July of the same year – by the memoir *Développement d'un principe fondamental de la physique des anciens, d'où naissent les réponses aux objections d'Aristote, de Lucrèce, de Bayle, contre le système d'Anaxagore* (HA Mém., XXV (1752–1754), pp. 48–67; 68–98). After the treatment of a theme related to his studies on Horace (*Développement de la morale d'Aristippe, pour servir d'explication à un passage d'Horace*, HA Mém., XXVI (1752–1754), pp. 1–9), Batteux developed some interesting *Réflexions générales sur l'étude de la philosophie ancienne* (HA Mém., XXVII (1755–1757), pp. 153–163), then presented a collection of ten *Mémoires historiques sur le principe actif de l'Univers* (HA Mém., XXVII (1755–1757), pp. 164–252; XXIX (1758–1760), pp. 229–324; XXXII (1761–1763), pp. 1–137), later complemented by the memoir *Si les Païens ont jamais ignoré le vrai Dieu. Addition aux Mémoires sur le principe actif* (HA Mém., XXXV, 1764–1766, pp. 171–188). These *Mémoires historiques* contain an outline – limited to Antiquity – of that history of metaphysics which was to be the object of his subsequent *Histoire des causes premières*.

During the same period, Batteux published *La morale d'Épicure, tirée de ses propres écrits* (Paris: Desaint et Saillant, 1758, pp. 374). The work takes Gassendi as its “chief guide” (“Avant-Propos”, pp. 9–10) and consists of two parts. In the first, after a general outline of “Epicurus’ century” (pp. 17–32), Batteux presents the philosopher’s opinions concerning the gods and the soul, pleasure and virtue, and criticises the hedonistic and materialistic premises of Epicurean morals, while acknowledging that it contains a “heart of truth” (p. 153). The second presents a French translation of Epicurus’ works, complete with notes and observations (pp. 177–362). In the wake of the success achieved in Germany by the *Histoire des causes premières*, the work *La morale d'Épicure* was also translated into German (Mitau, 1774; Halberstadt, 1792). Ten years after the work on Epicurus, a volume of translations with the parallel Greek text was published: Ocellus Lucanus, *De la nature de l'univers*; Timée de Locres, *De l'âme du monde*; *Lettre d'Aristote à Alexandre sur le système du monde, avec la traduction Française et des remarques* (Paris: Saillant, 1768). In his dedication to the “Messieurs de l'Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres”, Batteux declared that he had chosen these authors because the first two “had sketched an outline of philosophy among the Greeks, and the third brought it to completion” (p. VI; let us remember that, a few years before, the writings ascribed to Ocellus and Timaeus had been translated into French by the marquis d'Argens: see above, Sect. 1.1.2).

Finally, as a conclusion to these various historical works, Batteux wrote a general history of philosophy: the *Histoire des causes premières, ou Exposition sommaire des pensées des philosophes sur les principes des êtres* (Paris: Saillant, 1769; repr. Charleston [SC]: Nabu Press, 2010; Whitefish: Kessinger, 2010), pp. xx–456. The work was immediately translated into Italian (*La storia delle cause primitive, ovvero Esposizione compendiosa dei pensieri dei filosofi sopra i principi degli enti*, Verona: Marco Moroni, 1770), then into German: *Geschichte der Meynungen der Philosophen von den ersten Grundursachen der Dinge* (Leipzig: Dyck, 1773), edited by Johann Jakob Engel; other editions: Mitau: Hinz, 1774; Halberstadt: Gross in Komm., 1792. In the ‘Avant-Propos’, Batteux stresses the complementary nature of the *Histoire* and the three works on the “system of the world” mentioned above, which, “once joined to the fragments whose translation appears in the *Morale d’Épicure*, will form a collection of titles which are more than enough to judge ancient philosophy” (*Histoire*, p. VIII). In addition, he declares that in the course of his dissertation he intends to use not only “ideas and results” but also some passages taken from the several ‘memoirs’ on this subject submitted to the *Académie des Inscriptions*. Batteux’s historiographical work as a whole, therefore, which unfolded over a period of 15 years, appears to rest on a unitary and organic framework that conforms to specific choices of a speculative and methodological nature.

**2.3.3** Rather than in the introductory pages to the *Histoire des causes premières*, it is in his previous writings that Batteux gave his theory on the history of philosophy. In defining the criteria with which he intended to approach the history of ancient philosophy, he observes first of all that “in previous times, the object of philosophical research was not different from that of the present day. The purpose has always been to search for the causes suggested by phenomena. Secondly, in order to make their discoveries, the ancient philosophers availed themselves of the same natural tools we have at our disposal: I mean the senses, ideas, and reasoning. Lastly, they had the same sources of motivation and passion which urged them to bring these tools into play: glory and interest. Here you have, in two words, the philosophy and the philosophers of all times. All the differences that can be perceived, century by century, simply range between more and less. It follows from this that, to a large extent at least, in the objects offered to us by Nature, in the ordinary proceeding of our thoughts, and in the affections of our hearts we have the commentaries of the ancient philosophers. If we could place ourselves exactly in their position, [ . . . ] there is not doubt that, focusing our attention on their principles, the slightest thread would suffice to allow us to recover their thoughts, and we would not fail to perceive this thread among the ruins of ancient philosophy” (*D’un principe fondamental*, HA Mém., XXV, p. 68). These themes are taken up in the *Réflexions générales sur l’étude de la philosophie ancienne* (HA Mém., XXVII, p. 153), where Batteux makes it clear that “God, Man, and Nature, that is to say, the physical principle of motion and rest, have always been the three great objects of philosophy”. As for the “commentaries of the ancient philosophers”, they seem to be the inverted reflection of those “glosses of nature” to which Bacon had compared ancient philosophies (see *Models*, I, p. 167). But the image of the “thread” and the

“labyrinth” (see below, p. 127) is also typically of Bacon and seems here to be mediated by Condillac (on this significant interweave, cf. E. Garin, ‘Introduzione’ to Condillac, *Trattato dei sistemi*, Italian transl., Bari, 1977, pp. x–xi).

The strongly unitary perspective in which philosophy and its history are viewed makes it possible therefore to recreate the outlines of an ancient philosophical theory, even though very little of it has been preserved. Drawing a significant parallel with aesthetic doctrines, the author observes, with regard to Anaxagoras, that “if we consider carefully the state of the question as well as the circumstances in which man was placed, in relation to the different opinions of his time, it is almost enough to let ourselves be guided by common sense to discover the entire succession (*la suite*) of his system. A foot, a truncated limb was sometimes enough for an artist aware of the laws of proportion to discover the overall size of an ancient [statue]: does the mind possesses less power and extension in the sciences than it does in the arts?” (HA Mém., XXV, p. 69). It is interesting to note that a similar concept had already been expressed by Fréret: “The systems [of the ancient philosophers] appear to us like ancient statues, of which only fragments are preserved and which we cannot complete in its entirety without restoring the missing parts. I believe we owe the ancient philosophers the same justice we owe to the ancient sculptors: we must evaluate the parts we have lost through the parts we can still see and think that they corresponded to one another” (N. Fréret, *Observations générales sur l’étude de la philosophie ancienne*, HA Mém., XVIII, 1744–1746, p. 113).

For Batteux, the criteria for historico-philosophical research was not only provided by the realm of human subjectivity (the senses, the mind, and the heart of man), but also by the “objects offered to us by Nature”. This bears an analogy to the sphere of art, where nature is a guide and a measure: “This commentary is never misleading in the works concerned with taste, because Nature, which is a model and a measure of the arts, always allows us to discover the thread even when it disappears inside the author’s text. Similarly, it can be used as an interpreter of the philosophical writers. In the passages where their text is clear, it is the text that explains Nature; in the passages where the text is obscure, it is Nature that explains the text. Hence, the purpose is to study the subject pertaining to the difficulty present in the text of the ancients by considering it in itself, both by observing Nature and by studying the modern authors who have observed it” (HA Mém., XXVII, p. 162). Using the language of Galileo, we might say that the historian of philosophy is not a mere “scholar of memory”, bent over the books handed down from the ancients, but operates in constant contact with the “book of Nature”, which in any case has the task of judging the validity or non-validity of a philosophical doctrine. “If, after making adequate efforts, we do not understand Plato’s thought”, observes Batteux in the preface to the *Histoire*, “we should set aside Plato and study the matter in itself. This is all the more correct since, even if we were to understand Plato’s thought, we would still be obliged to verify it by studying the matter itself” (*Histoire*, pp. VII–VIII).

The fact that in this confrontation between “text” and “Nature” it is Nature that has the last word does not mean that the philosophical text has no intrinsic value as a “monument” and a “fact”. Indeed, in the preface to the short works ascribed

to Timaeus, Ocellus, and Aristotle, Batteux observes: “In working on these three texts, which for their smallness and precision can be considered as the medals of the Philosophical Empire, I had no other intention than to ascertain that which can be called the *fact* of ancient opinions. These are for the most part mistakes, but the *fact* of these mistakes is a *historical truth* with its original titles and monuments, which are as open to examination and discussion as the other facts are” (Ocellus Lucanus, *De la nature de l’univers* [...], pp. VII–VIII; italics ours). What, then, is the “use” of a history of philosophy which must be subject to the control of “Nature”, “things in themselves”?

By mixing notions rooted in empiricism and in Enlightenment thought with ideas deriving from the apologetic religious tradition, Batteux takes up the theme of the critical and ‘negative’ use of the history of philosophy. While affirming that the philosophical products of the ancients show “false gleams of light”, “risky opinions”, and real mistakes, he observes that “these mistakes amount today to truths, because they are recognised [as such]; they indicate on which side we can expect success. What progress would [the ancients] have made by themselves if, with the experience of the previous centuries, they had known – just as today we know thanks to their experience – that there are objects constantly rejected by human intelligence and that we must not persist in trying to penetrate the essence of beings? [...] There are mistakes: but these mistakes teach us that when we proceed without a guide and with no other light than that of reason along certain dark roads that Nature has kept for herself alone, we risk losing ourselves at any moment and plunging into an abyss” (HA Mém., XXVII, p. 158; see also XXV, p. 49, where the author points out that “Revelation serves as a guide to philosophy and prevents it from getting lost in this immense sea where almost all the ancients found nothing but rocks”).

But the function of ancient philosophy is not entirely negative: the ancients were also capable of discerning the truth because they were not devoid of “natural perspicacity” and “tact” in their relations with nature. Indeed, “precisely in this century which we define as a century of light, the more we advance towards Nature, the more we get close to them [= to the ancients]. So it is our task to point out that today the most reliable systems of physics and metaphysics have been assembled with nothing other than the remains of the systems of the ancients. A single element of their philosophy has given rise to entire treatises of modern philosophy”. Not only in the field of philosophy, but also in astronomy, geometry, geography, and mechanics, are we indebted to the ancients for “all the essential and fundamental discoveries”, a point that Fréret had already emphasised (see above, pp. 72–73). Instead of ignoring this debt, we have to acknowledge it overtly, because “philosophical erudition, far from depreciating a genius, inevitably provides him with more sublime and bolder opinions”. Here Batteux mentions the exemplary figure of Leibniz, who was not in the least concerned to conceal his debt to Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Zeno of Elea, Plato, and other ancient thinkers (HA Mém., XXVII, pp. 158–159). Indeed, research into the history of philosophy is never totally fruitless, not even in those cases where, after “laborious research”, the ancient texts continue to appear obscure; indeed, Batteux observes emphatically, “the effort made by the human mind never lacks its reward. Whether victorious or not, it always

comes back loaded with new spoils, a bit like the chemists [i.e. the alchemists] who, in looking for the gold which they did not find, found other precious results they had not looked for at all" (HA Mém., XXVII, p. 163).

In pursuing his analysis of the significance of work on the history of philosophy, Batteux points out its contributions to the *histoire de l'esprit humain*, thus showing a considerable awareness of the different disciplinary fields but also of the connections between the various disciplines: "In addition to these advantages of philosophical erudition considered in itself and as a section distinct from the other parts of literature, it also has a relationship with the other branches of history: it exerts a necessary influence on the history of humanity, whose variations have always been submitted to the opinions of the mind". We are indebted to "philosophical erudition" in the first place for "part of our progress in the ancient languages, which have a great number of expressions borrowed from philosophy" (the memoir on the *Développement de la morale d'Aristippe, pour servir d'explication à un passage d'Horace* [Hor. Ep. I, 16] is a concrete example of this application of the history of philosophy to our understanding of the Greek and Roman writers). In the second place, it must be noted that "ancient philosophy is the richest arsenal of modern unbelief", and this mere fact "would suffice to make its study advisable": indeed, today's adversaries of religion and Christianity simply take up what has already been said by Democritus, Protagoras, Epicurus, Ammonius, Plotinus, Porphyry, Celsus, and Julian. Finally – and here we find Batteux's concept of the historical development of philosophy again – "the study of ancient philosophy enables us to appreciate the various centuries in relation to their way of thinking and knowing: it offers us the measure of the human mind, showing us that it is always more or less the same, despite the differences related to the places, times, and the tools available" (HA Mém., XXVII, pp. 160–161).

It is in light of these premises that we should read the preface and the introduction to the *Histoire des causes premières*. Significantly, the work opens with a reference to the same need for a *reductio ad unum* which had inspired Batteux's aesthetic doctrine: "When, more than twenty years ago, I published *Les Beaux-Arts réduits à un même principe*, I had at first only the intention of freeing myself from a confused mass of observations, reflections, and rules, which were tiring but not illuminating for me. The same mode of thinking, or rather the same need, led me to this new undertaking, which is all the more necessary for me because my profession causes me to live in the chaos of ancient philosophy, and I felt compelled to formulate answers, especially concerning the question of causes" (*Histoire*, 'Préface', p. v). This need for clarity and rigour – in which we can see the legacy of the Cartesian spirit, in the systemising version provided by Condillac – manifests itself in a demand for general principles of explanation, in line with the method of Newtonian science. Both works, the aesthetic and the historico-philosophical one, are therefore involved in the appeal Batteux had made at the beginning of *Les Beaux-Arts*: "Let us imitate the true physicists, who collect experiences and then found on these a system that brings them back to a principle" (*Les Beaux-Arts*, 'Avant-propos', pp. I–II).

As the title itself indicates, Batteux does not intend to deal with the whole of philosophy but only with a particular subject, "first causes", and he proposes to

trace this “idea” “through the progress it has made, century by century and people by people”. But because of the size and importance of this theme,<sup>1</sup> the “history of first causes” comes to take on the structure of a general history of metaphysical theories, by means of which the author attempts to “judge whether philosophy in itself has been something advantageous in all ages or only in some centuries, according to the good or bad use men have made of it”. He adds the explicit warning that “by the word ‘philosophy’ we do not mean here the study of natural history or experimental physics or all the research into the effects of nature which can be grasped by means of observation, but, rather, that which we prefer to call explanation of Nature through the development of causes, that is to say, of secret impulses and purposes” (*Histoire*, pp. 5–6). The speculative attitude adopted by Batteux on this subject consists in excluding knowledge of the principle or *arché* from the range of enquiry proper to the human intellect, which, according to a Lockean perspective, is restricted to the concrete world within which men happen to live and act. Hence, faced with the problem of first causes, reason can do nothing but take that fundamental truth as a certain and irrefutable datum (“the unity of an intelligent first Cause”, namely, “the idea of a single supreme Being, master of the Universe”) which, from Antiquity onwards, has met with the general approval of all peoples (pp. 144–145).

From these premises a concept of philosophy is derived which not only resolves itself into morals (since philosophy “is nothing other than the art of knowing ourselves, as well as our relationships with other beings, in order to make ourselves perfect and preserve ourselves”: p. 10), but ends up by becoming confused with the notion of “common sense” or “conscience”, that is to say, with that series of beliefs which belong to the common heritage of humanity.<sup>2</sup> The philosopher is precisely he who has the task of giving this knowledge an organic form and who “teaches men to make use of the world, as it is, and not to waste their lives wondering how they would have made it, if God had not made it for them” (p. 14). The philosophers who make “good use of their intelligence and talents” are therefore only those who, “are convinced that as far as causes are concerned, the boundaries of science are not far from those of common sense, and have renounced all that which is called ‘system’

<sup>1</sup>“Connoître la nature des Causes, est de tous les objets de curiosité, le premier qui se présente à l’homme, lorsqu’il commence à réfléchir. Son propre intérêt le conduit à rechercher ce qu’il est lui-même, quelle est son origine, et quelle sera sa fin. Or ces trois questions supposent celle qui a pour objet la première Cause” (*Histoire*, p. 1).

<sup>2</sup>In his call to “common sense”, Batteux seems to echo the positions of the Jesuit Claude Buffier (1661–1737), which were highly regarded during the eighteenth century and inspired the philosophers of the Scottish School in particular (Th. Reid’s *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* appeared in 1764, a few years before the *Histoire des causes premières*). Cf. L. Marcil-Lacoste, *Buffier and Thomas Reid. Two Common Sense Philosophers* (Buffalo, 1982). In founding his enquiry into the ultimate truths on common sense, Buffier had distanced himself from both the ancients and the Scholastics (who “sometimes refuse to acknowledge the most important truths, when the latter are not enveloped in formalities and expressions authorised in their tribunals”) and from the *nouveaux philosophes*. Cf. C. Buffier, *Traité des premières vérités et de la source de nos jugements* (Paris: Vve Mauge, 1724), pp. 4–5.

and have directed their attention toward useful objects. How happy philosophers would be, if they could limit themselves to this!" (p. 452).

In accordance with Enlightenment ideals, Batteux is convinced that the purpose of studying philosophies of the past is to gain a better understanding of the nature of man and his limitations. "If this history was created as it should be, it would be more delightful and instructive than any other, at least for those who wish to know themselves. It is interesting to read the accounts of long wars; pleasant objects of study are the efforts made by two kings or two rival peoples confronting each other [...]. Here human restlessness faces the Divinity, and this concerns the destiny of each of us in particular" (pp. 3–4). Batteux thus claims the validity of the history of human thought compared with traditional political and military history (the *histoire-bataille*!), and at the same time points out the essentially 'critical' nature of his historiographical enquiry. Everything that believes it can go beyond the boundaries of knowledge is in fact seen as the result of man's "restlessness" and "impatience", and the history of first causes resembles the history of the mistakes of the human mind. This is precisely what the author intends to write: "We go backwards through the ages to the most ancient times and, if possible, to the early repositories of the ultimate truths and to the first link in that long chain of manifold deviations and mistakes which have tried mankind for many centuries" (pp. 14–15).

Batteux therefore excludes the possibility of discovering any true progress in the history of metaphysics. "Was it really necessary", he concludes after mentioning the various conceptions of the world maintained by the ancient philosophers, to spend "so many waking hours, volumes, disputes, over the course of so many centuries, just to provide us with these kinds of instructions?" (p. 399). The conviction that this is a science which can supply "nothing other than doubts, or at most conjectures, for the most part arbitrary" (p. 334), leads to a radical reduction of historiographical enquiry itself, in a polemic against the scholarly tradition of the previous centuries: "After so many lengthy and repeated commentaries on the ancient books, and especially after so many modern discoveries, made thanks to a direct study of nature, is it not high time that gloomy and laborious erudition – unable to teach us anything – was confined within the limits suitable to it?". This "reduction", certainly not free from the possibility of error, is however preferable to "certain long and dry discussions, which in most cases only succeed in giving rise to useless doubt, or in bringing to light an old mistake forgotten for two thousand years" (pp. VI–VII).

In the *Histoire des causes premières*, this critical attitude towards the philosophical past is more pronounced than in the *Réflexions générales sur l'étude de la philosophie ancienne*, where Batteux seemed interested in defending his role as a teacher of ancient philosophy. Repetition of the same events or the same opinions risks stifling or rendering insignificant the concrete development of human thought, reducing it to the recital of a well-known script. "To those who are not looking for dates and names, the history of a century is the history of all centuries"; what matters is only to "enjoy the spectacle, or at least to judge it from the correct point of view" (pp. 88–89). The very use of historical experience seems to be questioned because, "thanks to the restlessness and audacity of the human intellect, fathers' mistakes are seldom useful to teach their children" (p. 413). As it concentrates on



the history of first causes, historiographical activity is thus turned into a denial of the validity of its very object, tracing a ‘reverse’ history of philosophy: an anti-history of metaphysics, in which the radically critical orientation results in the fact that the philosophers, traditional holders of the faculty of judgement, systematically become the objects of judgement. In this respect, let us note the eloquent image based on a famous Laertian anecdote with which Batteux concludes his presentation of the “object and framework” of the *Histoire*: “Pythagoras compared the philosophers to those inactive spectators who did not attend the Olympic games to fight, like the athletes did, or to use the games as an opportunity to trade as the merchants did, but only to look and judge [cf. Diog. Laert. VIII, 8]. Is it forbidden for the crowd gathered here to look at these professional spectators and to exercise towards them a part of those rights that they exercise towards us?” (p. 6).

### 2.3.4 *Histoire des causes premières*

**2.3.4.1** The work opens with a short ‘Avant-Propos’ (pp. v–ix), followed by a ‘Table des chapitres. Objet, plan et division de cette Histoire’ (pp. x–xiv) and a ‘Table chronologique des philosophes cités dans cet ouvrage’, arranged in alphabetical order (pp. xv–xx). The text is made up of 452 octavo pages and consists of three parts or “epochs” divided into “sections”, which are, in turn, subdivided into “articles”; each of these divisions has its own title. The treatment is structured as follows:

“FIRST EPOCH. Thoughts of the ancient Orientals and of the ancient Greeks concerning the nature of primordial causes. SECTION I: The thoughts of the ancient Orientals; Art. I. The Antiquity of philosophy; II. Moses’ cosmogony, that is God as the only creator of all things; III. Thoughts of the Chaldeans concerning primordial causes, that is to say, Light and Darkness; IV. Dogmas of the Persians concerning primordial causes, that is to say, Oromaz and Ahriman; V. Doctrine of the Egyptians concerning primordial causes, that is to say, Osiris, Isis, and Typhon. SECTION II: Ideas of the ancient Greeks concerning primordial causes; Art. I. Ideas of the Greeks in the age of the colonies; II. Theology of the fabulous times: that is to say, Linus and Orpheus; III. The mysteries of Eleusis; IV. The unity of a supreme God, as it is known by all the educated peoples of Antiquity; V. Ideas of the Greek poets during the fabulous times, that is to say, Night and Love, principles of the world; VI. Hesiod’s theogony, that is to say, Jupiter and the Titans.

SECOND EPOCH. Ideas of the Greek philosophers concerning primordial causes. SECTION I: Early thoughts of the Greek philosophers concerning causes; Art. I. General framework of the systems; II. Thales, that is to say, the humid element; III. Pythagoras, that is to say, numbers as principles of beings. SECTION II: The Metaphysicians; Art. I. The School of Elea, that is to say, the unity of Being; II. Universal Soul of the world: § 1. Specious reasons for this opinion; § 2. Timaeus’ system, that is to say, God and matter reconciled by Harmony; § 3. Plato’s

expressions, that is to say, the same and the different; Art. III. Heraclitus and Zeno the Stoic, that is to say, the universal Soul confused with Destiny. SECTION III: The Physicists; Art. I. Aristotle, that is to say, Active Natures; II. Strato of Lampsacus, that is to say, animate Elements. SECTION IV: The Mechanicians; Art. 1. Leucippus and Epicurus, that is to say, Atoms self-moving in vacuum; II. Anaxagoras, that is to say, Atoms invested with qualities and moved by an infinite intelligence; III. Recapitulation of the thoughts of the ancients concerning primordial causes.

THIRD EPOCH. Summary of the opinions of some modern philosophers concerning primordial causes: Art. I. Fruitless centuries as to philosophy; II. Descartes and Malebranche; III. Cudworth and Jean Le Clerc, that is to say, Plastic Natures; IV. Spinoza (that is to say, the unity of substance), Leibniz (that is to say, the Monads), Newton (that is to say, the Idea of causes from effects)".

**2.3.4.2** As the order of the work indicates, Batteux identifies three great periods in the development of philosophy. The first opens with the origins of philosophy and, through Noah, Abraham, and Moses extends to the Oriental peoples and the "theologians" and poets of archaic Greece. The second, following Diogenes Laertius, includes Greek thought from Thales to Epicurus. While adopting the traditional division of philosophy into two schools, the Ionic and the Italic, Batteux replaces the subdivision into seven with a systematic subdivision according to a framework derived from Aristotle, which allows him to "reduce" the philosophers after Thales and Pythagoras by assembling them into three classes: Parmenides, Zeno of Elea, Plato, Heraclitus, and Zeno the Stoic are placed among the "metaphysicians"; Aristotle and Strato of Lampsacus among the "physicists"; and Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, and Anaxagoras among the "mechanicians" or "mathematicians".

This framework, extended to the "unitarians" or Spinozists, is also adopted for the modern philosophers, whose "thoughts" on primordial causes "are enclosed in approximately the same circle as the ancients. We find here, like elsewhere, the Mechanicians, who solve everything by means of the primary qualities of bodies; the Metaphysicians, who avail themselves of incorporeal beings; the Physicists, who make use of occult natural causes; and finally, the Unitarians, who maintain that there is only one substance, which is diversified by the different forms it produces, or rather, by the forms originating thanks to the spontaneous activity residing in the substance itself" (p. 421). This form of classification is accompanied by another more general subdivision related to the criterion of the acceptance or not of a first cause which produces reality: "We can arrange [the philosophers] according to two classes: one struggles against the need for an intelligent and universal cause; the other asserts it with all sorts of proofs. Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, and Strato attacked it with their systems; Thales, Anaxagoras, Timaeus, Plato, and Zeno supported it with theirs" (p. 140).

The third epoch is the most extensive in chronological terms, yet at the same time it takes up the least space (only 48 pages). Under the name of "modern" philosophers it assembles all the thinkers from the period from Epicurus to Newton. Batteux skims over Roman and Alexandrian philosophy, stresses the importance of the advent of Christianity, passes over the Middle Ages and the Renaissance,

and then dwells on a number of thinkers properly considered as modern: Descartes, Malebranche, Cudworth, Le Clerc, Spinoza, Leibniz, and finally Newton.<sup>3</sup>

**2.3.4.3** Batteux begins his treatment with the theme of the “Antiquity of philosophy”, thus clearly declaring himself against those who usually place “its beginnings in the century of Thales and Pythagoras [...] and are persuaded that, before this period, the knowledge collected by mankind should not be considered as philosophical knowledge”. In reality, philosophy (understood not as a metaphysical system, but more generally as “the master of life, the mother of laws, the torch and the rule of mankind”) is as ancient as man and its birth is impossible to distinguish from the birth of the sciences and the arts, namely, of civilisation in its entirety. What has been the use of philosophy, asks the author emphatically, other than to build towns, lay down laws, develop trade, navigation and the arts, in brief to shape society in all its expressions, and therefore to “know ourselves and our relationship with others, to preserve and perfect ourselves”? (*Histoire*, pp. 7–10; for similar considerations concerning the effects of the arts, see *Les Beaux-Arts*, I, 1, pp. 5–9).

In its early stages, philosophy is therefore at one with “the faith of mankind”, containing the history of the origin of the world, and consequently the fundamental principles of religion and morals, and it serves as a basis for the first “philosophical reasonings” (*Histoire*, p. 118). It is around this “repository” of very ancient traditions and beliefs that the fundamental idea of the work revolves: namely, the conviction that all the civilised peoples of Antiquity recognised, like Homer, “the unity of a supreme God”, which is “one of the essential truths for man’s happiness, and which originates together with us, enters us through all our senses, and – just like light – is visible to us without looking at it” (p. 139). The entire development of ancient thought is traced back to this core of original truths, which runs through all periods of time and all peoples: the Chaldeans, the Persians, and the Egyptians derived their knowledge from Moses’ primary teaching, and the Greeks, in turn, derived it from the peoples of the East. More particularly, among the ancient Greeks, during the time of the “theologians”, the legislators, the “sages”, and the poets, we again find “the two fundamental points which underlie religion and law”: the belief in a God who is “powerful, good, and just, reigning over everything, by himself or through his ministers”, and the belief in an afterlife (p. 181).

The second epoch is characterised by the rise of metaphysics, which marks the beginning of the progressive departure of knowledge from its original practical and factual value, and of its resolution into abstract concepts disconnected from

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<sup>3</sup>Quite a different from of periodization had been outlined at the beginning of the *Mémoires historiques sur le principe actif de l’Univers*, in which ancient philosophy is subdivided into three epochs: from the early philosophers to Thales; from Thales to Socrates; from Socrates to Chrysippus or Posidonius, who is considered to be “the last of ancient philosophers, because those who came later, up to Descartes, did nothing other than copying, translating, or commenting on those who had preceded them. We might add”, observes the author, “a fourth epoch, beginning with Descartes and ending with Newton; however, since the thoughts of these philosophers are in the hands and before the eyes of everybody, anyone who is interested will be able to connect the last link in the chain we are forming to the first link of modern philosophy” (HA Mém., XXVII, p. 168).

concrete reality. Indeed, from this moment – when “everything starts to depend on metaphysics”, a “new order of reasoning” establishes itself, supported by those who preferred to solve the questions of nature “in their heads rather than in nature itself or in the traditions inherited” (pp. 185–186). This second phase of thought is described as “a labyrinth in which the ancient philosophers were lost for ten centuries [ . . . ]. These great men, these lights of the world, these confidants of the secrets of Nature, have taught us nothing” (p. 397). Within this globally negative judgement, particularly remarkable is the position of Epicurus, who dared to declare that “in the Universe everything was done without a cause and without God”, thus cutting “the thread of ancient ideas and turning the whole world into a great machine governed by chance. All the other systems implied final causes, more or less developed; Epicurus’ system was ruled by pure mechanism” (p. 255).

Batteux points out a series of differences between the alleged ancient and the modern materialists. In the first place, the ancients (contrary to the modern philosophers, with the sole exception of Epicurus) never claimed to deduce rules and principles which were valid on a moral plane from their metaphysical doctrines. Being aware of the limited nature of all sciences, these philosophers considered their metaphysical speculations to be mere hypotheses and “philosophical games”, which certainly could not constitute the foundation of the behaviour of the citizens. The other argument that saves the ancient thinkers from the accusation of materialism concerns the distinction they made between two species of substance-matter. Indeed, since the ancients did not possess the same rich vocabulary as the moderns, they equated what we generally define as ‘substance’ with the notion of ‘matter’ (*Sixième mémoire*, HA Mém., XXIX, pp. 322–323). This allowed them to contrast an inert and passive matter, devoid of any internal regulative principle, with “a sort of infinitely subtle matter”, endowed with “all the attributes of the spirit”. Batteux can thus affirm that “it becomes clear in what sense the ancient philosophers could be materialist. They reconciled their materialism with providence, with justice, with the wisdom of the Divinity, and therefore with religion: their system was not produced by the restlessness of the heart or by a love for false freedom; it was a deviation deriving from weakness, from a mistake of the mind which was submerged in a question too profound for it” (*Histoire*, pp. 190–192). Such materialism is therefore similar to the materialism of Spinoza only as regards “expressions”: “The Being of Spinoza is the true and real substance of beings, the substance of which they are composed [ . . . ]. The Being of the Eleatics was either the entire sum of the substances which make up the world or a sort of being of reason whose only attribute was that of ‘being’” (pp. 242–243).

Batteux’s refusal to identify a “Spinozism” in Antiquity thus places him in opposition to Bayle and to those writers who saw Spinozism as a recurrent element in the course of human thought. This refusal is linked to Batteux’s criticism of the tendency to indiscriminately relate every doctrine of the moderns to the ancients. “Some moderns”, he observes in this regard, “have insistently asserted that this system [of Spinoza’s] was nothing but the development of the ‘unity’ of which Orpheus or the Eleatics had spoken. But who can cherish the certainty of knowing the developments of the opinions held by Orpheus or by the philosophers of Elea?

One can imagine these developments on the basis of those present in Spinoza, then it is said that Spinoza resembles Orpheus. This is the method used by those who claim they can find in the ancients all that which has been said by the moderns: a word is enough to provide the key to all the details. Timaeus knew electricity, hence he made it into a sort of universal mainspring. Pythagoras spoke of the monad: it was Leibniz's Theodicy [...] (p. 445).

This criticism, which is difficult to reconcile with what Batteux had previously said about the debt the moderns owed to the ancients, was probably triggered by the strong reactions to the work by Dutens (about which see below, Chap. 3, Introd., § 1). In any case, easy concordism – which had already been criticised by Deslande: see *Models*, II, pp. 189–190 – is countered by the objection that it is difficult to understand the few texts handed down from the ancient philosophers in their true sense (a position in conflict however with the stated possibility of reconstructing the system of a thinker *more archaeologico* . . .). Indeed, according to Batteux, the ancients “undoubtedly made many discoveries in the field of metaphysics and in the other parts [of philosophy], which require only intelligence and sharpness of mind, and perhaps even surpassed us; but in order to express a judgement in this matter it is not only necessary to have their texts at hand, but also to be really certain that we understand these texts as they did; if not, it is most prudent to abstain from comparing and judging” (p. 446).

At the beginning of his work on the history of philosophy, Batteux drew readers' attention to Anaxagoras, who in his *Histoire* is intentionally placed at the end of the treatment of the ancient philosophers because “his system appears to be a correction of their systems” (*Histoire*, p. 372). But in the chapter on Thales, Batteux had already observed that, of all the philosophers of the Ionian region, Anaxagoras was the first to conceive of the “intelligent first Cause” as an entity which is absolutely spiritual and clearly distinct from the material principle, which is in itself devoid of that capability of action, direction, and movement that belongs exclusively to the “Divinity” (p. 210). Anaxagoras' doctrine appears to be the only “regular edifice” in Antiquity, because, in addition to dissolving every form of materialism, it was capable, instead of elaborating useless and misleading metaphysical systems, “of presenting the tradition again” (pp. 397–398).

Besides Anaxagoras, the other ancient thinker who is treated positively is Socrates, who becomes the spokesman of Batteux himself. Indeed, Batteux sees the Athenian philosopher as the person who showed men the right path to “reach common sense again, who founded welfare on the belief in a God who made all things and on the science of customs, which made us find happiness in the perfection of our nature”. At the same time, Socrates was “too judicious” to deny the importance of physical and natural disciplines, whose study “has always belonged legitimately to man” (*Septième mémoire sur le principe actif de l'Univers*, HA Mém., XXXII, p. 8). Hence he suggested the study of nature, but only “as far as this study is really useful to man” (*Histoire*, pp. 224–225). Socrates' philosophy, therefore, “simply teaches us, through the spectacle of Nature, the existence of an intelligent Cause, which has made and makes all things thanks only to the desire of thought” (*Septième mémoire*, p. 8).

As to the other major Greek philosophers, despite his “poetical enthusiasm”, Plato did not distance himself from his predecessors, in particular Timaeus of Locris, in laying down the principles of matter and God, understood only as an ordering principle (*Histoire*, pp. 287–288). Aristotle, “wishing to penetrate the core of things, loses himself in his principles, and shows us the world as done, preserved, governed, by a certain concord of Nature”, according to which being, moving, and acting appear to be independent of God (p. 349). This mechanistic conception – which turns the universe into “a big machine made of self-moving wheels, which fitting into one another produce their effects according to the nature of the principles they are composed of, or of the subjects receiving their impression” (p. 345) – makes it impossible to reconcile Aristotle’s doctrine with the Christian religion. Following Bayle, Batteux emphasises the naturalism of Strato of Lampsacus, whose system “reduces everything to casual encounters and to the spontaneity of motion, without any universal intelligent Cause”. On one hand, he associates Strato’s thought with Stoic materialism, and on the other, with some necessary amendments, with Cudworth’s theory of plastic natures, because “one might say that it pleased God to endow the different particles of matter with this indefinite vitality which tries to merge with other parts and organise itself according to the plans established by the very nature of elements. This idea seems to approximately accord with plastic natures, which some moderns believed they could accept and reconcile with the dogma of Providence” (pp. 361–362). As for Stoicism, Batteux believes that closer scrutiny reveals that its principles come close to those of Epicureanism: the *rationes seminales* are mere “dispositions inherent in matter and not intelligible models outlined in the mind of God”, and are therefore similar to the “mechanical qualities” of atoms; the world of the Stoics can be compared to an “animate clock that enjoys counting the hours it necessarily strikes”, and providence is understood “at most as a mechanical spring, namely, it is governed rather than governing” (pp. 307 and 319; see *La morale d’Épicure*, pp. 157–169, where a comparison is made between the Epicurean and the Stoic sects, and, despite visible differences, their fundamental *conformité* is underlined).

Batteux extends modern historiography’s traditional negative judgement on the Middle Ages to cover a much broader time span, from the Roman epoch up to the seventeenth century. The treatment of these centuries, which are “fruitless” from the point of view of the history of the human mind, is extremely concise. Roman philosophy is “nothing but a commentary, or a quotation, or a translation” of Greek thought (*Histoire*, p. 406), while the doctrines that flourished in Alexandria are the object of typical Enlightenment criticism: “The so-called modern Platonists [...] added Oriental fanaticism and Egyptian superstition to the enthusiasm of their master. The Cabbalists or Judaeen philosophers, who reconciled Moses with Plato and Aristotle, wanted to pass off their fancies (*rêveries*) as the tradition of the early Patriarchs. The Eclectics, under Potamon and Ammonius, by selecting what was best and most sensible in the different sects, took their prejudices as norms and had their friends as disciples” (p. 411).

The advent of the Christian religion marked a fundamental step in the history of thought. Batteux (like Bayle: cf. *Models*, II, pp. 123–124) emphasises the centrality

of creationism as the only doctrine capable of resolving the dualism into which the ancient thinkers had fallen. Indeed, they did not come to understand that the solution consisted in “giving everything to God and removing everything from Matter, even its existence; and in attributing to God not only all causality, but also all the essential substance existing in the universe, considering all the rest as simple effects which have been produced, both in their form and in their substance” (*Histoire*, p. 396). Christianity also triggered a reorganization of philosophy: aware “that it had gone too far, [philosophy] tried [...] to come closer to Christian dogmas on several points, which were also more in accordance with reason”. In this way it reverted back to its initial positions: the primitive faith of humanity in a single omnipotent and providential God, and in the immortality of the soul (pp. 412–413).

But the balance which had been restored was soon broken: over the following centuries, philosophy reverted back to its early mistakes and began a long journey of “useless speculations which, although they were renewed from century to century thanks to the mixing of ideas, contain nothing new and worthy of being accepted today”. In addition to the heretics of the first centuries of the Christian era, this negative judgement includes the Church Fathers (who, concerning the first causes, did nothing but try “to reconcile Plato with faith, or to explain faith through Aristotle”) and the Scholastics, who “added a difficult form to the philosophy of the Fathers, and a multitude of useless and often ridiculous questions”. What is noticeable here is the absence of any references to Humanism and the Renaissance: Batteux moves from the “fruitless centuries” directly to the seventeenth century, the “century of Descartes”, and “those fortunate times when the human mind, renewed [...] after twelve centuries of ignorance, rising up from itself without prejudice, offered us a thoroughly new philosophy” (p. 415; for a parallel with the history of ‘taste’ and letters, in which the overcoming of medieval ‘darkness’ is also placed in the first half of the seventeenth century, while the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries are neglected, cf. Simone, pp. 371–373).

But Batteux does not accept the common judgement by which “Descartes taught us to think and to doubt”, pointing out what the ancient philosophers as well as some moderns like Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Galileo, Bacon, and Gassendi had already taught. As well as ridding us of commonplaces, this sort of demythicization makes it possible to clearly identify the actual role played by Descartes in the development of modern thought: “Descartes, full of his own glory, does not need to steal the glory that the ancients had legitimately earned”. His merit lies in his struggle against “pedantry” and Scholasticism, “which had sacrificed Ramus and shaken Gassendi”. He broke once and for all “the enchantment of those barbarous, meaningless voices”, thus freeing “the earth from two deaf and blind monsters, Prejudice and Preconception, which have blocked man’s entrance to truth for two thousand years. In a word, [...] Descartes provided the human mind with a new edition, but the book had been written before him” (*Histoire*, pp. 419–420). Yet not even this French philosopher “cast a new light on the nature of first causes, nor on their manner of operating. He did not surpass the ancient limits concerning this question. Everything remains mystery for us, as it was before” (p. 430). As for Cudworth and Le Clerc, Batteux relates the concept of “plastic natures” to the

“active forms or forming natures of the ancients” (with reference to Aristotle and Strato) and at the same time denounces the contradictions into which this theory had fallen: “Does this ‘nature’ know its aim or not? If not, how can its action differ from a simple mechanism? How can it relieve God from the concern of governing purely material beings? And if it knows its aim we fall back into the systems whose disadvantages we wished to avoid” (pp. 439–440).

In the case of Spinoza’s monistic system, Batteux does not dwell on the usual denunciations of its “absurd and dangerous consequences”, but – like Condillac in his *Traité des systèmes* – bases his confutation on an examination of the principles that had been Spinoza’s starting point. These are principles of a metaphysical nature, and as such they lack a foundation and therefore nullify the whole speculative edifice he had raised: had Spinoza, Batteux asks, “a clear and distinct idea of that which is called ‘substance’? Does he know its nature, essence, or properties? Has he understood what an infinite and simple substance is, that it is everything and that it is one? Can he reconcile in his mind rigorous unity with multiplicity, with the distinctions and with the real divisions of beings? If it is true that these ideas are totally absent in Spinoza, as in all men, then it is evident that he has drawn conclusions from the unknown to the known, and hence his fundamental argument is null” (pp. 443–445).

Considering the rigorously anti-metaphysical context in which Batteux was writing, Leibniz’s thought could not but meet with criticism, even though the German philosopher is defined as “one of the most vigorous intelligences which ever appeared”. “After three thousand years, we were seeking the explanation to a great enigma”, observes Batteux after mentioning the “sublime contradictions” of Leibniz’ monadology. “Starting from where we are, we think that we at least hold the end of the chain that sustains us; but this very end slips out of our hands and we somehow fall into an infinite void. How can we find in this new chaos made up of ideas – which we do not possess and whose contraries we have – the principles of customs, how can we find freedom, religion, reason, virtues, vices, rewards, in a word that which makes man physical and moral? [. . .] Is there any sensible man who can plan his behaviour and happiness on the basis of Leibniz’ system?” (pp. 449–450).

Leibniz, who got lost “in the abyss of metaphysical causes” is contrasted with “the more reasonable and modest” Newton, who with his use of scales and compasses, became the prototype of the “modern wise man”, who “believed that man, who is made for using things and not for creating them, had to take the world as it is and limit his science to observing”. Therefore, it is only from this moment onwards that we can speak of the birth of modern science: for Newton limited himself to identifying a “small number of simple laws” concerning that which is experimentally observable, thus admitting his ignorance as regards the nature of the first causes. Nevertheless, this birth of modern science contains elements of a return to the origins, because Leucippus, Democritus, and Anaxagoras “had already opened up this path, but enthusiasm and an unreasonable taste for the marvellous and the new almost always prevented men from following it. It seems that our century is treading it again. Many of our philosophers, convinced that, as for causes,



the limits of science are not far from those of common sense, have renounced all that which is called system and have turned their eyes to useful objects. How happy philosophers would be if they confined themselves to this!" (pp. 450–452).

The merits of modern scientific thought do not therefore consist in its originality, but rather in its ability to have retrieved and methodically developed that legacy of intuitions which had already been expressed by the most ancient sages, in particular Anaxagoras, and which still today remain the only path to follow.<sup>4</sup> The historical development of philosophy appears therefore to be structured according to a circular framework: there is no real progress, but only the recovery and deeper analysis of initial intuitions, after the long and fruitless parenthesis of metaphysical systems. So we go back to the considerations with which Batteux had concluded his account of biblical cosmogony, traditionally attributed to Moses, who always refused to explain "the secret of each of God's operations" because they are inaccessible to the human mind: "Whatever one may say, as regards the first causes, we are still at the point where Moses left us. [...] All the steps the human intellect has attempted to make beyond these limits have been purely a waste" (pp. 23–24).

**2.3.4.4** The aim to outline the history of a single "idea", that of the "first cause", enables Batteux to simplify the treatment and, at the same time, to reduce it to its essentials by reducing the systems of philosophy to their principles. The traditional framework of classifications by schools ('sects') and biographies is therefore replaced by a classification of a speculative nature which is applicable both to the ancients and to the moderns. The narrative revolves around the most representative thinkers of the different schools of thought and is intertwined with the author's own observations. "Can we do anything better", Batteux had already observed in the first of his *Mémoires sur le principe actif de l'Univers*, "than to choose a limited number of authorities and respectable titles for each century and nation, whose doctrinal positions we think it important or useful to know, and present them as they are available to us, adding short observations which can be of help rather than an additional burden for the mind?" (HA Mém., XXVII, p. 170; see also *Histoire*, 'Avant-Propos', pp. v–vi). Because of the preeminent position

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<sup>4</sup>In his first *mémoire*, Batteux had associated Anaxagoras' thought (which included the doctrine of homoeomeries and the distinction between an intelligent and spiritual God and matter) with that of Newton: the latter "in his *Optics*, explicitly affirms that there are immutable and indestructible physical principles, possessing size and shape, endowed with those properties and qualities that the supreme Being wished to give them, in relation to the plan of the universe he had developed. He [Newton] explains why: because, without this, today the world would no longer be the same as it was a long time ago; water, earth, would no longer be the same as they were at the time of their primeval origin; and he adds that the intelligent Cause, by a special decree of its will, necessarily formed the first complete individual of each species, in order to give form, through him, to all the others. The transition from these principles to those of Anaxagoras is not long. These two men, though separated by over 20 centuries, go hand in hand; and perhaps it would not be difficult to show that this philosophy comes from even further and its source lies in the traditions of the remotest and most respectable Antiquity" (*Conjectures sur le système des homéoméries*, HA Mém., XXV, p. 67).

of the doctrines, the biographical profiles are short and concern only the ancients; and they are often complemented by a general background of the century in which the philosophers lived. The need for “reduction” becomes evident above all in the summary outline that concludes the second epoch (*Histoire*, pp. 387–403) and in the treatment of the modern thinkers, appearing as an appendix to the original design, which was limited to ancient philosophy.

This simplification is in contrast with the lengthy and muddled works produced by the traditional *historia philosophica*, and it is conducted with scrupulous professional competence. Batteux shows considerable interest in the methodological problems concerning the historiography of philosophy, especially regarding Antiquity. In his *Réflexions générales sur l'étude de la philosophie ancienne*, he had dwelt on the difficulties emerging from the study of the “monuments” of ancient philosophy, among which he mentions in particular the different meanings once attributed to terms like “body, nothing, being, non-being, matter, nature, spirit, infinity”. In order to overcome these obstacles he set out some methodological guidelines: it is possible to grasp the real sense of a philosophical text “by comparing similar texts by the same author, by a meditated reading of the various writers of the same epoch and genre, by carefully examining the objections and answers formulated against contrary opinions” or “by carefully discussing the definitions of things and words” and “especially by turning to the very matter which is the object of their research and discussions”. Here Batteux inserts the passage on the relationship between “Nature” and the historiography of philosophy which we have already quoted for its theoretical as well as its strictly methodological significance (see above, p. 119); Batteux then derives practical consequences from this principle: “If the object of the writer was a truly philosophical one, very soon we will see a light emanating from Nature which will be reflected in the author’s work: we will see at least some gleams, just enough to guide our steps and lead us to a complete system of profound knowledge reduced to essentials by means of long meditation. If, on the contrary, after much effort and research, the darkness remains impenetrable; if the study of Nature does not shed any light on those who wished to comment on it, then it will be finally necessary to leave the texts in their obscurity and wait until they can be clarified, or perhaps re-established, thanks to some fortunate case reserved for someone else who will deal with the same object on other occasions” (HA Mém., XXVII, pp. 161–163).

As for the sources used in the *Histoire des causes premières*, we find above all Diogenes Laertius, Cicero, Pseudo-Plutarch’s *Placita philosophorum*, and Aristotle, some of whose works Batteux quotes directly. Among modern scholars, he explicitly refers to Stanley, Bayle, Brucker, Burigny, and Fréret. The only modern philosopher Batteux quotes directly is Cudworth, whom he knew through Mosheim’s translation (cf. *Models*, I, p. 288). There are very few notes in the modern section, but more in the ancient: these are mostly explanatory and bibliographical, but in some cases they contain substantial “reflections” vaguely resembling the *remarques* of Bayle’s *Dictionnaire* (see, e.g., *Histoire*, pp. 339–340, on the eternity of the world in Aristotle, and pp. 345–348, on the unmoved mover).

**2.3.5** The volume on Epicurus and the *Histoire des causes premières* were welcomed by the *Journal des savants*, which particularly praised the *Histoire*'s spirit of synthesis, as well as the order and clarity which a "dry and abstract subject" had been dealt with (JS, 1769, II, p. 413). A positive judgement was also expressed by the *Journal de Trévoux*, which was particularly receptive to the apologetic religious implications: the *Morale d'Épicure* was praised for its accuracy in assembling all the elements of Epicurus' thought, as well as "for the solidity of the principles that the author raises against this system; for the strong and conspicuous preference he gives to the lights and the laws of religion" (MT, 1758, I, pp. 1376–1377). The general verdict on Batteux is positive: "In all of his works, written with method and as much elegance and wisdom, he works for the mind as well as for the heart; he clarifies the former and guides the latter; he inspires love of order, creates a taste for virtue: he shows that in philosophy, in morals, and in letters, it is necessary as he had affirmed elsewhere, for the chain of our knowledge to be linked to the same point as that of nature" (MT, 1769, I, pp. 151–152; despite such words of praise, Maréchal did not hesitate, 30 years later, to include Batteux in his *Dictionnaire des athées*, using as a pretext a sentence which appeared in the initial pages of the *Histoire des causes premières*).

The judgement formulated by Grimm, a close friend of Diderot, was diametrically opposed to the opinions of the Catholic reviewers of the *Journal de Trévoux*. In reviewing the publication of the *Morale d'Épicure*, he defines Batteux as "one of those men who are not devoid of merit and are endowed with mental lucidity, clarity, and method; but, as they lack genius, opinions, and that which characterises the superiority of the mind, they have neither the necessary subtlety and delicacy, a sufficiently confident touch, or sufficiently exquisite taste to perceive these merits in others". Defending Epicurus here (whose "metaphysical system is full of marvels and audacity" and whose morals "are no more contrary to customs and virtue than those of the other schools"), Grimm observes polemically that abbé Batteux "wastes his time deriving all sorts of bad consequences from Epicurus' system: one could write a book just as long to demonstrate the uselessness and often the falseness of his undertakings" (*Corr. litt.*, III, pp. 510–511).

We are able to discern Diderot's philosophical stance from this judgement; and perhaps it was Diderot himself who wrote the personal attack against Batteux on the occasion of the publication of his *Histoire des causes premières*. After correcting the title of the work to the *Histoire des opinions sur les causes premières* – "since", it is observed ironically, "in order to trace the history of first causes, it is necessary to know them first" – the reviewer remarks that men have uselessly "written nonsense on these abstract matters", not affecting in the least the "blind and immutable course" of nature. At this point, the ironical tone becomes sharper and is directed against the author himself and the clerical dress he wears ("Moreover, I wish to point out to our dear abbé Batteux that when someone in this world has taken on one of the many harlequin costumes, trimmed with braids, or one colour, either red or black, with a small collar or ruff, he should abandon once

and for all discussion concerning philosophical subjects, because it is impossible to speak in good faith and according to one's conscience at the same time": *Corr. litt.*, VIII, p. 243).

In the eyes of the most radical *philosophes*, Batteux's attitude – which, from a speculative point of view, was in line with the most current positions but was ideologically committed to the defence of the Christian tradition – must indeed have appeared dangerous, above all for his Catholic revision of Epicurean morals. It is enlightening, in this respect, to look at the reception of Batteux's historiographical works by Naigeon, Diderot's pupil, mentioned above. The *Histoire des causes premières*, which was brief but incisive, was used to integrate the entries of the *Encyclopédie méthodique* concerning the history of philosophy, but the author's name was hardly ever mentioned. The text of the *Morale d'Épicure* was also quoted in its entirety as an appendix to the entry 'Épicurisme', but Naigeon took care to warn the reader in advance with some 'Réflexions générales' and also with a series of notes at the foot of the page. He reproaches Batteux for being a "prejudiced judge", a mere scholar who tries to oppose the advance of "experimental and rational philosophy"; and the *Morale d'Épicure* is considered as an "indirect confutation" of the "excellent entry" on Epicurus that Diderot had written for the *Encyclopédie* (an insinuation of this kind, albeit veiled, had already appeared in the *Journal encyclopédique* in 1758). Furthermore, Batteux's allegedly "secret hostility" against philosophy is made to depend on the criticisms that the *philosophe* Diderot had formulated against his aesthetic doctrines. In his notes, Naigeon accuses Batteux, for example, of "bad faith" and a poor understanding of history for having claimed that some ancient philosophers professed a hope of "immortal life and endless happiness" (Naigeon, *Philos. ancienne et moderne*, II, pp. 334b–336a and 341a).

Apart from Naigeon's heated polemic, which brings us to the heart of the revolutionary climate, the Italian and German translations of the *Histoire des causes premières* are evidence of the interest aroused by this work. Gurlitt, for example, quoted it in his *Abriss* (see below, Sect. 8.6.), and this 'technical' use of a work which might seem to us to be of a populist nature confirms the judgement expressed in an obituary of Batteux: the *Histoire des causes premières* "is within the reach of a limited number of people; it is also slightly cold; but we have to agree that it is the outcome of profound erudition" (GE, 1780, VI, p. 136). The success of the work, however, did not last beyond the final decade of the eighteenth century, and it was only briefly evoked by Degérando. After this, it was only occasionally mentioned, even though it deserves to be re-appraised together with the rest of Batteux's historiographical work. Indeed, his richly cultured personality, the scope of his production (intended both for the popular and the academic world), and his awareness of the theoretical and methodological questions underlying historiographical work make Batteux the most substantial historian of philosophy engendered by French culture in the second half of the eighteenth century.

**2.3.6** On Batteux's life and works: 'Notice historique sur feu M. l'Abbé Batteux', JE, 1780, VI, pp. 136–137; *Le nécrologe des hommes célèbres de France*, XVI (1781), pp. 47–84; A.-M. Le Mierre, 'Discours prononcé le 25 janvier 1781, lorsqu'il fut reçu à la place de M. l'Abbé Batteux', in *Recueil des harangues prononcées par MM. de l'Académie Française dans leurs réceptions*, VIII (1775–1782), pp. 296–307; L. Dupuy, 'Éloge de M. l'Abbé Batteux', HA Mém., XLV (1780–1784), pp. 91–106 (on pp. 100–105 we find a detailed presentation of his historico-philosophical works); BUAM, IV, pp. 454–456; J. Pommier, 'Autour de la Lettre sur les sourds et les muets', *Rev. Hist. litt. France*, 51 (1951), pp. 261–272 (on his relationship with Diderot).

Critical literature: E. Escallier, 'Un disciple oublié de Gassendi: l'abbé Batteux, professeur au Collège Royal', in *Tricentenaire de P. Gassendi* (Paris, 1957), pp. 163–172; Simone, pp. 336, 362, 370–376; F. Bollino, *Teoria e sistema delle belle arti. Charles Batteux e gli "esthéticiens" del sec. XVIII* (Bologna, 1976); Dagen, pp. 135 and 145; U. Ricken, *Grammaire et philosophie au siècle des lumières. Controverses sur l'ordre naturel et la clarté du français* (Villeneuve-d'Ascq, 1978), pp. 111–117 and 149–155; I. von der Lühse, *Natur und Nachahmung. Untersuchungen zur Batteux-Rezeption in Deutschland* (Bonn, 1979); E. Migliorini, 'Il paragrafo 51 della Critica del giudizio: Batteux e Kant', *Rivista di Storia della Filosofia*, XXXIX (1984), pp. 283–291; I. Torrigiani, *Lo specchio dei sistemi. Batteux e Condillac* (Palermo, 1984); M. Modica, *Il sistema delle arti: Batteux e Diderot* (Palermo, 1987); L. d'Hulst, *Cent ans de théorie française de la traduction: de Batteux à Littré (1748–1847)* (Lille, 1990); S. Albertan-Coppola, *La pastorale enseignée, ou le Cours de belles-lettres de l'abbé Batteux*, in *La pastorale française. De Rémi Belleau à Victor Hugo*, ed. A. Niderst (Paris, 1991), pp. 119–128; A. Davidenkoff, 'La fortune de l'abbé Batteux en Russie (1713–1780)', in *L'ours et le cocq. Trois siècles de relations franco-russes. Essais en l'honneur de Michel Ladot*, ed. F.D. Liechtenhahn (Paris, 2000), pp. 29–39; Y. Delègue, 'L'abbé Batteux ou l'invention du "médiocre"', in *Pour une esthétique de la littérature mineure*, ed. L. Fraisse (Paris, 2000), pp. 51–64; M. Rosellini, 'Des belles-lettres à la littérature. La révolution pédagogique de l'abbé Batteux', in *Bonnes lettres/Belles lettres*, C. Poulouin and J.C. Arnould eds. (Paris, 2006), pp. 363–392; H. Thoma, in Ueberweg, II/2, pp. 786–789 and 795–796.

On the reception of his works on the history of philosophy: *Corr. litt.*, II, p. 45 (29th April, 1754); III, p. 510 (15th May, 1758); VIII, pp. 242–243 (1st January, 1769); MT, 1758, I, pp. 1349–1376; 1769, I, pp. 136–152 and 330; JE, 1758, v/3, pp. 40–52; JS, 1769, II, pp. 406–417; ADBibl., XXII (1774), II, pp. 555–558; XXVIII (1776), II, pp. 501–502: Batteux is mentioned as a historical source in Chr. G. Schütz, *Einleitung in die speculative Philosophie oder Metaphysik* (Lemgo, 1776); ADBibl., XXXIII (1778), I, pp. 196–202 (on the *Morale d'Épicure*); *Coup d'oeil sur les ouvrages de feu M. l'Abbé Batteux*, AL, VI, 1780, pp. 73–123; P.-S. Maréchal, *Dictionnaire des athées anciens et modernes* (Paris, An VIII), p. 32; Degérando<sup>1</sup>, I, p. 52; Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, pp. 134–135; Ernesti, p. 118; Freyer, p. 79; Braun, p. 380; G.

Piaia, 'L'approccio storiografico a Spinoza nel Settecento francese: Ch. Batteux e l'ab. Pelvert', in Id., *Taleta in Parnaso*, pp. 223–237.

## 2.4 Étienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714–1780)

### *Introduction à l'étude de l'histoire*

Gregorio Piaia

**2.4.1** Étienne Bonnot (the name Condillac, from the title of the estate bought by his father in 1720, was taken subsequently) was born in Grenoble into a family of magistrates on 30th September, 1714. Poor health meant that he began his studies late, and after the death of his father (1727) he moved to Lyon where he stayed with his elder brother, Jean Bonnot de Mably, and attended the local Jesuit college. In Lyon he made the acquaintance of Rousseau, who was engaged as his brother's tutor. Through the good offices of his other, elder brother (Gabriel Bonnot, known as the abbé de Mably), who was then in the service of the cardinal de Tencin, Minister of State, he continued his studies in Paris at the seminary of Saint-Sulpice and at the Sorbonne. In 1740 he was ordained as a priest but, though he kept the clerical habit, he immediately gave up his pastoral duties and joined the social and literary circles of the capital, in particular the *salon* of M<sup>me</sup> de Tencin. For 18 years, up until 1758, he devoted himself entirely to his studies and to the writing of his philosophical works. It was through Diderot, who was also a friend, that he came into contact with the most renowned *philosophes* of the time. In 1749 he was appointed associate member of the Berlin Academy.

A new phase in his life began in 1758, when the duchess of Parma and Piacenza Louise Elisabeth, the younger daughter of Louis XV, invited him to Parma to become the tutor of the *infante* don Ferdinand. Condillac devoted himself to the role of educator, with the object of instilling the future duke of Parma with the ideals of the *lumières*, but the mediocrity of the pupil rendered his efforts futile. After his employment came to an end in 1765, when the young Ferdinand succeeded his father Philip of Bourbon as duke, Condillac travelled around Italy and returned to France in March 1767, having obtained, as a reward for his work, the benefice of the Abbey of Mureau (in the diocese of Toul) and a pension. In 1768 he became a member of the *Académie Française*, in the place of the late abbé d'Olivet, but he was inconstant in his attendance of the academic sessions and devoted himself above all to the publication of his *Cours d'études*, even refusing an invitation to take charge of the education of the three children of the Dauphin. He left Paris and stayed at the château of Flux in the region of Orléans, which had been bought in 1773 on his behalf for a niece to whom he was particularly attached and with whom he spent his last years, devoting himself to the study and revision of his works. He died in the night between the 2nd and the 3rd August, 1780, the victim – according to contemporary sources – of a “putrid, bilious, and verminous fever”.

**2.4.2** Condillac's major philosophical works followed in rapid succession within the space of a decade, according to a set plan. His early works – *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines, ouvrage où l'on réduit à un seul principe tout ce qui concerne l'entendement humain* (Amsterdam: P. Mortier, 1746; English transl.: *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, London: Nourse, 1756 [repr. Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1971]; transl. H. Aarsleff, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), and *Traité des systèmes, où l'on en démêle les inconvénients et les avantages* (The Hague: Neaulme, 1749; English transl.: *A Treatise on Systems*, in Condillac, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. F. Philip (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1982, vol. I, pp. 1–153) – reveal the influence of both Locke, whose works he knew through Pierre Coste's French translation, and Newton. These works are a prelude to the more mature systemisation later contained in the *Traité des sensations* (London and Paris: de Bure, 1754; English transl.: *A Treatise on the Sensations*, in *Philosophical Writings*, I, pp. 154–339), which was followed and complemented by the *Traité des animaux, où, après avoir fait des observations critiques sur le sentiment de Descartes, et sur celui de M. de Buffon, on entreprend d'expliquer leurs principales facultés* (Amsterdam and Paris: de Bure, 1755).

After a series of editorial setbacks, a second group of writings resulting from his teaching activity at the court of Parma were printed together in the *Cours d'étude* (which, after the first editions, was regularly changed to the plural: *Cours d'études*) *pour l'instruction du Prince de Parme*. Compiled in Parma between 1758 and 1765 and subsequently revised in France, this 'course' was first printed in Parma, with the support of the duke, by the printer and publisher Giambattista Bodoni. But episcopal censorship, sensitive to the criticisms Condillac had made of the temporal power of the Church, banned its publication in the territory of the duchy, where the reforming policy of the minister Du Tillot had been defeated in the same period. Partly rewritten, the work was therefore printed in Deux-Ponts (Zweibrücken) and appeared in 1775 in 16 volumes containing the false reference "À Parme, de l'Imprimerie Royale". Later on, in 1782, the Bodoni edition, which had been lying in the stores of the ducal printing house for a decade, was finally given permission to be published, but – out of extreme caution – its place of publication was given falsely as "Aux Deux-Ponts". The *Cours d'études* was reprinted several times and was also translated into Italian: Condillac, *Opere*, translated by abbot Marco Fassadoni (Venice, 1793–1799), vols VIII–XVII; *Corso di studi* (Naples, 1815), 16 vols. It is structured as follows: *Introduction au Cours d'études* (English transl.: *Introduction to the Course of Study*, in *Philosophical Writings*, II, pp. 553–590); *Grammaire*; *De l'art d'écrire*; *De l'art de raisonner*; *De l'art de penser*; *Introduction à l'étude de l'histoire*. In addition to these writings by Condillac, the 'course' includes *De l'étude de l'histoire* by the abbé de Mably, Fénelon's *Directions pour la conscience d'un roi*, edited by Félix de Saint-Germain, and two *Suppléments* to the latter. The *Introduction à l'étude de l'histoire* is an extended treatment of general history from its beginnings to around 1720, which in the 1775 edition takes up 11 out of 16 volumes and was also translated into German: *Geschichte der ältern und neuern Zeiten. Aus dem Französischen übersetzt von Johann Christoph von Zabuesnig*

(Augsburg, 1778–1779, 3 Vols). This textbook of history also devotes ample space to ancient and modern philosophy, and it is from this point of view that it will be examined here.

During later life, Condillac also became interested in questions concerning political economy (*Le commerce et le gouvernement considérés relativement l'un à l'autre*, Amsterdam-Paris, 1776); moreover, at the request of the Polish government, he wrote a textbook of logic for schools (*La logique, ou les premiers développements de l'art de penser*, Paris, 1780; English transl.: *Logic, or the First Developments of the Art of Thinking*, in *Philosophical Writings*, I, pp. 341–422); he also wrote *La langue des calculs*, left unfinished, which was published in the complete edition of Condillac's works (Paris, 1798) and is now available edited by A.-M. Chouillet and S. Auroux (Lille, 1981). An edition of the *Oeuvres philosophiques de Condillac*, edited by G. Le Roy, appeared in Paris during the years 1947–1951 in three large volumes, in which the text is printed in two columns. In addition to the unpublished *Dictionnaire des synonymes de la langue française*, it comprises those parts of the *Introduction à l'étude de l'histoire* which pertain to philosophy and the history of philosophy and civilisation; it is therefore this edition that we refer to here (*Oeuvres philos.*, II, pp. 1–237).

**2.4.3** Condillac showed no particular interest in the historiography of philosophy in itself or, more generally, in the history of philosophy, but such interest, which is organically linked to the epistemological and psychological themes that characterise his work, manifested itself within the broader field of the history of culture and civilisation. Indeed, it is precisely this failure to constitute an autonomous 'genre' which enabled Condillac's work on the history of philosophy to enter into the thick of the lively philosophical and cultural debate taking place in the mid eighteenth century. "The experience of the philosopher, like that of the pilot, is the knowledge of the rocks on which others have foundered; and without this knowledge no compass can guide him", Condillac had declared in the introduction to his *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, after clearly distinguishing two types of "metaphysics"<sup>5</sup> and observing that, with the sole exception of Locke, the philosophers had devoted themselves above all to the former type. Despite the fundamental mistakes made by Descartes, Malebranche, and Leibniz – indeed, due to these very mistakes – Condillac acknowledges the usefulness of studying philosophers of the past. We can see that this is a form of research that immediately goes beyond historical data and aims at the speculative nucleus: indeed, "it would

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<sup>5</sup>*Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, transl. H. Aarsleff, pp. 3–4: "One has the ambition of solving all mysteries; nature, the essence of all beings, the most hidden causes, those are the things that embellish it and that it promises to open up. The other is more modest and adjusts its inquiries to the weakness of the human mind, and being as unconcerned about what must lie beyond its grasp as it is avid to seize what lies within it, this sort of metaphysics is content to stay within the bounds that are marked out for it. The first turns all nature into a kind of enchantment that anyone who wishes to make progress in the search for truth, it is essential to know the mistakes of those who first sought to open the way".



not be sufficient to uncover philosophical errors unless we get at their causes; we should even rise from one cause to the next till we reach the first; for there is one that must be the same for everyone who goes astray, and that is like the unique point that is the beginning of all the paths that lead to error. Here then, perhaps, at this point we will find another where the unique road to truth begins" (*Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, transl. H. Aarsleff, p. 5).

Hence Condillac's intention to analyse the origin and the 'history' of the workings of the human mind. This totally philosophical and ideal investigation, however, takes place against the background of a general framework of the, more strictly historical, course of human thought, which is based on the sequence of four fundamental moments. The first is the acceptance, on the part of the Peripatetics, of the "principle, that all our knowledge is derived from the senses"; this acceptance, according to Condillac, resulted from the pure spirit of novelty, without grasping its real meaning: indeed, "so far were they from having any certainty of this truth, that not one of them could ever explain it, and after a long succession of ages, the discovery was not yet made". Then Bacon appeared on the scene, who "is perhaps the first who perceived this truth", placing it at the basis of the *Novum organum*. By contrast, Descartes' followers – and this is the third moment – "rejected this principle with contempt, because they judged of it only from the writings of the Peripatetics". Lastly, and finally, "Mr. Locke seized upon it, and has the honour of being the first to demonstrate it". But the work done by the English philosopher was incomplete as concerns "the origin of the operations of the mind", and it is precisely in this field that Condillac intended to make his contribution to the foundation of a correct "metaphysics" (*Essay*, pp. 8–11).

This plan is developed not only in the *Essai* but also in the *Traité des sensations*, through the well-known story of the man-statue. On one hand, this strictly theoretical perspective makes historical analysis taken as a comprehensive treatment of human knowledge from the beginnings *usque ad nostram aetatem* totally secondary; on the other, it gives rise to a 'speculative' history of philosophy based on frameworks of classification of a conceptual nature rather than on periodization or the subdivision into sects or schools. This is what happens in the *Traité des systèmes*, where the critical comparison with the great philosophers of the previous century is developed within a tripartite division in which all the philosophical systems of history can be placed, even though Condillac did not take it upon himself to draw up a complete list of these systems, but limited himself to a detailed analysis of some emblematic positions. At the beginning of the *Traité*, after giving a definition of what is generally meant by "system",<sup>6</sup> he immediately points out that "in the

<sup>6</sup>A *Treatise on Systems*, Ch. I, in *Philosophical Writings*, I, p. 1: "A system is nothing other than the arrangement of different parts of an art or science in an order in which they all lend each other support and in which the last ones are explained by the first ones. Parts that explain other parts are called principles, and the fewer principles a system has the more perfect it is. It is even desirable to reduce all principles to a single one". For a comparison with an analogous systematic approach in Batteux, see above, p. 121; cf. also J.-L. Vieillard-Baron, 'Le concept de système de Leibniz à Condillac', *Studia Leibnitiana*, Suppl., XV (1975), pp. 97–103.

works of philosophers we can observe three sorts of principles, from which three sorts of systems are formed". These are presented in an order that reflects their diffusion, inversely proportionate to their validity: "The principles I put in the first class, as the most fashionable ones, are general or abstract maxims. [...] Principles of the second kind are suppositions formulated to explain things that we could not otherwise give an account of. If these suppositions do not appear impossible and if they provide some explanation of known phenomena, philosophers do not doubt that they have discovered the true guiding principles of nature". But abstract notions only serve to classify ideas and cannot lead us to the explanation of phenomena; as for suppositions, they are "a handy expedient for ignorance, imagination makes them up with so much pleasure and so little pain. It is from our beds that we create, we govern the universe. All this costs no more than a dream, and philosophers dream readily". By contrast, "it is less easy to consult experience and to assemble facts with discrimination. That is why we rarely take only well-established facts for principles, although perhaps we have many more of them than we think", as in the case of the Newtonian principle of gravity. In fact, "true systems, the only ones that merit the name, are based on principles of this last kind" (*A Treatise on Systems*, Ch. I, in *Philosophical Writings*, I, pp. 1–3).

Giving pre-eminence to the types of theories rather than to specific cases in history, Condillac does not intend to broaden the plan formulated so far. "By mixing these different sorts of principles we could form still other sorts of systems. However, as they would always be more or less related to one of the three I have just mentioned, there is no need to make up new classes of them". Since empirical observations are "the only proper scientific principles", the aim he pursues is "how then could others have been imagined?". The question is formulated in psychological and epistemological terms, not from an erudite historical perspective. Indeed, immediately afterwards he observes: "Systems are older than philosophers. Nature creates them, and there were no inadequate systems when nature was man's only teacher. For then a system was and could only be the result of observation. It had not yet been suggested that everything could be explained. Man had needs, and he sought only the means for satisfying them" (*A Treatise on Systems*, p. 3; this theme is taken up again in detail in the treatment of the history of philosophy: see *Oeuvres philos.*, II, p. 192a, where it is observed that "the authentic method was known before philosophers existed" because, "from the very origin of societies, men knew that in order to educate themselves it was necessary to observe"). Condillac – in a way that inevitably invites a parallel with Rousseau – seems therefore to idealise a state of primitive 'philosophical health', which was related to fundamental needs and to the ensuing practice of empirical observation, and, strictly speaking, preceded the historical appearance of philosophers. For him, philosophers made mistakes because of a misuse of suppositions and general ideas, which instead of being considered simple means were taken as principles of systems and of the sciences.

It is on these bases that Condillac gives shape to his critical analysis, which mainly focuses "on the misuses of abstract systems", with reference to the positions maintained by Descartes, Malebranche, Leibniz, and Spinoza. He also examines "the origin and development of divination" and "the origin and consequences of

the preconception of innate ideas". He is referring here, however, to a genesis of a logical kind, in which the historical element is only briefly mentioned (as in the case of the transmission of the astrological doctrines from the Chaldeans and the Egyptians to the Greeks, then to the Arabs and the moderns) or is reduced to an ideal rather than a chronological reference (*A Treatise on Systems*, Ch. v, pp. 28–29; Ch. vi, pp. 33–34; for a comparison with the "history of the progress of language", as it is traced in the *Essay*, cf. Dagen, pp. 102–103). Despite his obvious empiricism, Condillac inherited the spirit of Descartes' geometry, and he made a considerable contribution to the formation of a rigorously speculative history of philosophy, following the same line of development which, albeit for different theoretical reasons, was to be followed both by Kant and Hegel. After describing the *Traité des systèmes* as "an unusual document of a type of philosophical historiography", Garin observes that, "adjusting it to the due proportions, we are almost tempted to say that Condillac's *Traité* is to the French eighteenth century what Hegel's 'lessons on the history of philosophy' are to the German nineteenth century" (E. Garin, 'Introduzione' to Condillac, *Trattato dei sistemi*, p. XXXII).

If in the 'Avant-propos' to the *Dissertation sur la liberté*, placed at the end of the *Traité des sensations*, Condillac had repeated his purely 'natural' conception of the *histoire de l'esprit humain* and appeared intolerant and dismissive of the series of wrong opinions which could be derived from the history of philosophy (*Oeuvres philos.*, I, p. 315a), the writing of the *Introduction à l'étude de l'histoire* – within the vast scheme of the *Cours d'études* – signals a broadening of his cultural concerns, which now reveal an intense interest in the historical development of human intelligence. This broadening of perspective can be seen in the *Discours de réception à l'Académie Française* (1768), where Condillac declared explicitly that "after attempting to elaborate an analysis of the faculties of the soul, I have tried to follow the human mind in its progress". He then outlined "the succession of the advances of the human mind from the revival of letters onwards", providing a lively summary of the historical and cultural sections of the *Cours d'études* (*Oeuvres philos.*, I, pp. 389–393). Indeed, writing a universal as well as political and cultural history gives Condillac the opportunity to test his epistemological theories on a historiographical plane. The entire *Cours d'études* is even built on the basis of the ideas presented in the *Essai* and in the *Traité des sensations*, as is evident from the *Discours préliminaire* and the *Leçons préliminaires* (*Oeuvres philos.*, I, pp. 397–418). This moment of application within Condillac's oeuvre is therefore neither marginal nor secondary, nor is it limited to his teacher relationship with the future duke of Parma; rather, it represents the means for the systematic diffusion of his philosophical principles and, more generally, the principles of the *esprit des lumières*. From this point of view, the treatment of the history of philosophy contained in the *Introduction à l'étude de l'histoire* is of much greater significance than Fénelon's *Abrégé des vies des anciens philosophes*, which was also intended for the education of a high-ranking figure, but aimed at the more traditional objectives of imparting information and moral teaching (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 148–151).

For Condillac, therefore, the *histoire de l'esprit humain* can be interpreted in two ways: either as an “analysis of the faculties of the soul”, that is, of the way in which the cognitive process develops in man considered ‘in himself’ (symbolised by the well-known statue), or as the “sequence of the advances of the human mind” taken in its concrete historico-cultural development. There is also a third meaning, less frequently used and intermediate between the previous two, which concerns the development of the cognitive experience in the individual personality of this or that particular thinker. In the section of the *Cours d'études* devoted to the *Art de penser*, for example, in dealing with the “reflection” on one’s states of consciousness, Condillac observes that “the philosophers might have compensated for our inability to study ourselves using our own means (which is our most frequent condition), if they had left us a *history of the advances of their minds*”. This is what Descartes did and it is “one of the great debts we owe him. Instead of attacking the Scholastics directly, he describes the period in which he himself was mired in the same prejudices; he does not conceal the obstacles he had to overcome to rid himself of these prejudices; he provides the rules of a method which is much simpler than all those that had been popular before him; and half-revealing the discoveries he thinks he has made, he prepares our minds to acquire the new opinions he intends to lay down by pointing them in this direction” (*Oeuvres philos.*, I, p. 768b).

These three ways of understanding the history of the *esprit humain* are coordinated and refer to one another. In Condillac’s lectures on modern history the treatment of Italian culture after the year 1000 is preceded by a specific chapter containing theoretical and pedagogical considerations, the title of which is particularly eloquent (‘How, by reflecting on ourselves, we can explain the ages of ignorance and the ages in which the arts and the sciences underwent renewal’). This lengthy digression is justified by the principle that “the contents of knowledge originate and develop in a people in its entirety in the same way in which they arise and develop in each particular man. The history of your mind”, continues Condillac, addressing the future duke of Parma but also all his readers, “is therefore a compendium (*abrégé*) of the history of the human mind: it is similar as concerns its foundation, and it differs only in some particular circumstances which accelerate or slow down the progress of knowledge” (*Oeuvres philos.*, II, p. 160b). In the *Cours d'études*, the history of the *esprit humain* is examined together with historical and political events (the sequence of kingdoms and empires). This lesson – observes the author in the *Discours préliminaire*, in accord with the *Discours à l'Académie* quoted above – is communicated after the pupil’s mind has been educated through the study of the “art of speaking, which is considered to be the art that teaches us to think” (*Oeuvres philos.*, I, p. 404b).

Condillac defines history as “a collection of observations offering citizens of all classes a number of truths that concern them”, so that we have the chance “of enlightening ourselves thanks to the experience of past centuries”. In order to attain this end it is necessary to select the material (“Therefore the purpose is not accumulating all facts and loading our memory with them. It is necessary to

choose”). After listing the contents of the discipline,<sup>7</sup> Condillac provides some interesting explanations concerning the way in which he intends to deal with historical facts: “When we need to know facts just to be able to follow the thread of events, I limit myself to mentioning them; but I develop them – together with all the circumstances which have been handed down to us – when we are dealing with the seeds that prepare the revolutions which will become manifest in time. This way of examining history is made possible by subdividing it into a multitude of periods of varying length, each of which ends with a revolution. By this means, each piece of history is one. The last element, to which everything is referred, determines the choice of facts” (*Discours préliminaire*, in *Oeuvres philos.*, I, pp. 404b–405a). In addition to the usual “thread of events”, therefore, Condillac aims to reconstruct the genesis of *révolutions* with the same rigour adopted in the “natural history of the soul”. These revolutions are the great changes punctuating the course of history, which are made to correspond to as many periods and it is these *révolutions* that represent the climax of each period and provide the criterion for selecting the facts around which the historical presentation must be structured. If we want to use traditional labels, which are generally considered to define in terms of difference, we could say that the sensism Condillac displays here is a ‘forerunner’ of romantic and idealistic historicism.

The nature of the relationship between the *histoire de l’esprit humain* (including the history of philosophy) and the other aspects of the historical world is explained at the beginning of the *Introduction à l’étude de l’histoire*, where Condillac clearly distinguishes three levels: the “way of thinking” (which is the object of the history of the human mind), the “customs of a nation”, and the “government”. These three levels act upon one another. Customs are subject “to all revolutions of the human mind”, and for this reason they are different depending on whether a people is barbarous and ignorant, civilised and “enlightened”, or whether it has fallen back into barbarism – and they in turn determine the type of government. This relationship of derivation, however, is accompanied by an inverse reaction, in which “a government influences customs, and customs influence the way of thinking”. The entire course of history can therefore be explained systematically by this interplay of action and reaction involving the three constitutive elements, just as the analysis of human faculties had enabled Condillac to base his method of knowledge on rigorous foundations. “The more you observe peoples”, he remarks, speaking to his eminent pupil, “the more you notice the mutual influence linking these three elements. You will be convinced that it represents the principle of all the revolutions which have taken place and of all those which will take place, and that it can therefore bring

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<sup>7</sup> *Cours d’études, Discours préliminaire*, in *Oeuvres philos.*, I, p. 404b: “Hence this study embraces all that which can contribute to the happiness or unhappiness of peoples: i.e. governments, customs, opinions, abuses, the arts and the sciences, the ‘revolutions’ and their causes, the advances in greatness, and the decline of empires, which is viewed in its beginning, acceleration, and final end. In a word, it embraces all those things that helped to form civil societies, improve them, defend them, corrupt them, and destroy them”.

about the happiness or unhappiness of your kingdom". These are the reasons why the study of history completes the educational curriculum designed for the future sovereign (*Oeuvres philos.*, II, pp. 9–10; for analogous considerations concerning the relationship between government, temperament of peoples, and languages, cf. *Essay*, II, I, xv, § 143, pp. 284–285).

Within this conceptual framework, the history of philosophy is justified because it allows us to learn from the mistakes of the past, on the basis of a typical Enlightenment criterion which had already been expressed in the introduction to the *Essai* and is emphasised again in the introductory chapter to ancient philosophy. Condillac responds to the current objections which deny the use of the study of the past ("why should we waste time conducting this kind of research instead of using it to acquire real knowledge? . . .") by affirming that "our purpose is not to study opinions [just] in order to know opinions: nothing would be more frivolous than this. We should study them in the same way as a pilot studies the shipwrecks made by those who sailed before him", because mistakes are implicit in all beginnings and "our reasoning would start badly if it proceeded without knowing how man reasoned before us. We would rebuild the systems which have already been built, we would repeat the absurdities which have already been said"; and this would happen until someone made good use of our mistakes and proved himself capable of taking the right path (*Oeuvres philos.*, II, pp. 22b–23a).

Justifying the study of Plato's opinions, Condillac observes, "History is concerned with those who slowed down the progress of reason as well as with those who made it advance". Later on, with regard to Aristotle, he makes it clear that he only intends to deal with the Stagirite "to let you know his way of reasoning and enable you to grasp his influence on the alleged philosophical spirit of subsequent centuries. This is the only perspective from which the study of ancient systems can be remarkable and useful" (II, pp. 64a and 73a; but see also p. 94b, footnote, where Condillac concludes his account of ancient philosophy and emphasises the "most instructive chapters", namely, those which "develop the principles of the art of reasoning on the basis of experience and familiarise with the method I have already explained in my *Logic*". These chapters – and let us note the interesting kind of 'reading' of ancient philosophy proposed here – are those containing "reflections" and "observations" [chapters I–III, IX–X, XXIV, XXVI–XXVII, in addition to chapter XVII, concerning Socrates], and not those more traditionally narrative chapters).

The history of philosophy therefore has no intrinsic validity, nor does it occupy a position of its own in Condillac's conception of knowledge. It is strictly aimed at producing a method of good reasoning. Indeed, if a bad use of language had not led to mistaken philosophical opinions, "I would not have been compelled to trace the history of philosophy for you. The study of language would suffice to teach you everything: we would merely need a good grammar and a good dictionary" (II, p. 91a; the whole chapter 27, pp. 90a–94b – devoted to the mutual influences between languages and philosophical opinions, with particular reference to Maupertuis' *Dissertation sur les différents moyens dont les hommes se sont servis pour exprimer leurs idées* – is of great interest in order to grasp the theoretical and linguistic perspective in which the study of the history of philosophy is placed).

## 2.4.4 Introduction à l'étude de l'histoire

**2.4.4.1** The course of history is divided into two parts: the *Histoire ancienne* (in 17 books subdivided into 186 chapters) and the *Histoire moderne* (in 20 books and 107 chapters). In most cases, unlike the chapters, the books have no titles. The text contains marginal notes that serve as summaries of each chapter. In the *Oeuvres* edited by Le Roy, at the beginning of volume II there is a complete 'Table des matières'. The sections concerning the history of philosophy are clearly distinct from the rest of the treatment and occupy book III of the *Histoire ancienne* (devoted to ancient philosophy up to Epicurus and subdivided into 27 chapters), book VIII of the *Histoire moderne* (entitled 'Des lettres dans le Moyen Âge' and subdivided into 7 chapters), and the twentieth and final book, 'Des révolutions dans les lettres et dans les sciences depuis le quinzième siècle', subdivided into 14 chapters (*Oeuvres philos.*, II, pp. 22–94, 129–155, and 172–237; in the 1775 edition, these correspond to the following volumes: VI, pp. 1–275; XII, pp. 353–448; XV, pp. 151–384). In addition to these three main sections, there are some chapters in the *Histoire ancienne*, missing from Le Roy's edition, which serve to connect and integrate the others, namely chapters III–IV of the second part of book IV (concerning the 'Revolutions in the thought of the Judaeans' and the doctrine of the Cabbala), chapter V of book XI ('On the Romans' taste for philosophy'), chapter V of book XIV ('First book of Marcus Aurelius' moral reflections'), and chapters II and VII of book XV ('On the opinions of pagan philosophers before Jesus Christ and during the first three centuries of the Church'; 'Considerations on the second century' [this is a synthesis of the cultural tendencies of ancient Christianity]). On the other hand, the Le Roy edition includes chapter VIII quoted above ('How, by reflecting on ourselves, we can explain the ages of ignorance and the ages in which the arts and the sciences went through a renewal') and chapter IX ('On the state of the arts and the sciences in Italy from the tenth century to the end of the fifteenth') of book IX of the *Histoire moderne*. To get an idea of the approach adopted by Condillac, we need at this point to look at the internal subdivisions of the three books which constitute the core of his course on the history of philosophy:

"ANCIENT HISTORY, book III: chapter I. Object of this book; II. General considerations on the opinions of the ancients; III. Why the advances of the human mind are more rapid and substantial in some domains, while they are slower and weaker in some others; IV.–VIII. (On the doctrines of the Chaldeans, Egyptians, Persians, Indians, Scythians, Celts); IX. On the causes that favoured or slowed down the progress of the arts and the sciences; X. Observations on the way in which men have classified the arts and the sciences; XI. On the Greek poets before the Trojan war; XII. On the poets, rhapsodists, and sophists after the Trojan war; XIII. On the seven wise men; XIV.–XXIII. [On the Greek sects up to the Stoics]; XXIV. Considerations on happiness and the opinions of the philosophers in this regard; XXV. On Epicurus; XXVI. Reflections on the way in which the ancients practiced reasoning; XXVII. On the influence exerted by languages on opinions and about the opinions on languages.

MODERN HISTORY, book VIII: chapter I. How the Arabs cultivated the sciences; II. On the state of letters among the Greeks from the tenth century to the fifteenth; III.-VI. [On the “state of letters” in the West from the sixth century to the fifteenth]; VII. On Scholasticism, and the way in which the arts and the sciences are taught.

MODERN HISTORY, book XX: chapter I. Revolutions brought about in the domain of letters by the Greeks who took refuge in Italy after the seizure of Constantinople; II. Absurdities and fanaticism among men of letters and Scholastics in the sixteenth century; III. On philosophical sects in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; IV. On the philosophical opinions of the seventeenth century; V. The beginning of true philosophy. Astronomy under Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Kepler, and Galileo; VI. Birth of several sciences. Algebra, analysis, principles of mechanics, laws of motion, the pendulum clock; VII. On optics and its early advances; VIII. The great discoveries; IX. On the universal gravitation discovered by Newton; X. Considerations on the progress of the sciences and the arts; XI. On the progress of politics; XII. On the progress of the art of reasoning; XIII. On the usefulness of the sciences; XIV. On the obstacles which still oppose good studies”.

**2.4.4.2** The form of periodization adopted by Condillac can easily be deduced from the table of contents which is present in the work. Within the more general division into the ancient age (up to the fall of the Western Roman Empire) and the modern age, there is a clear distinction between the “opinions of the most ancient peoples”, that is to say, traditional barbarian philosophy, and Greek philosophy up to Epicurus. Within the latter, however, the usual subdivision into schools contains a more intrinsic criterion based on a *révolution*, that is to say, on a highly significant change in the way of philosophising. The most important *révolution* was brought about by Socrates, who was the first to become aware of the problem of knowledge and to develop moral reflection. Another *révolution* took place in the age of Zeno and Epicurus at the beginning of the Hellenistic age, when “circumstances” induced the philosophers to “seek happiness in perfect tranquility”, causing philosophy to take on “a new aspect”, even though in practice “it will say nothing new” (*Oeuvres philos.*, II, p. 76b).

The following period runs from the Hellenistic age to the third century AD, while the philosophy of the Romans is examined separately. Ancient Christian thought is divided into centuries, and medieval thought is distributed into four periods: from the barbarian invasions to Charlemagne, from the ninth century to the eleventh, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The traditional tripartition of Scholasticism is not included. The first “faint rays” to illuminate the medieval darkness are found towards the middle of the fourteenth century, but it is with Gerson that “the obscurity which had enveloped theology started to disperse” (pp. 145ab and 147a). The philosophies of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are divided into schools, while the presentation of more recent thought is structured according to a clear distinction between those who continued to follow wrong methods (the subject of the chapter entitled ‘On the philosophical opinions of the seventeenth century’) and the supporters of “true philosophy”, that is to say, the experimental method. Condillac himself explains this separate treatment



by pointing out that “by placing the series of mistakes on one side and the series of discoveries on the other I will make you better perceive the advantages of a good method” (p. 191b).

**2.4.4.3** Condillac’s historiographical theories mirror his theoretical principles. Indeed, the treatment of ancient philosophy opens with a denunciation of the “ignorance and conceit of the ancients”, who were convinced that they could know the foundations of the real and, on the basis of a totally groundless authority, transmitted and perpetuated their mistaken opinions from one epoch to another. Their ignorance was taken for a wisdom which had to be discovered, so “you will see the Greeks interrogate the Egyptians, because the Egyptians were their ancients. For the same reason, you will see the Romans interrogate the Greeks, and we in turn will interrogate the Greeks and the Romans. Empires follow on from one another, and nations are buried under their ruins, but opinions remain. They belong to all ages and never grow old. Even when a revolution in the way of thinking seems to occur, this revolution often reveals itself to be an ancient opinion in disguise rather than a new opinion”. The root of this chain of mistakes that runs through the history of thought lies in the wrong cognitive attitude: “[even] before observing anything, the philosophers undertake to explain everything, putting forward questions without knowing whether it is possible or impossible to solve them [ . . . ]. They were curious to know only those things which were out of their reach; they combined vague, obscure, or false ideas, formulated hypotheses and, since they did not perform any observation, they continually replicated the same opinions in new forms” (*Oeuvres philos.*, II, p. 22).

In Condillac, therefore, the problem of the origins of philosophy moves from the traditional historical and geographical field (where, when, and with whom did philosophy originate?) to the genetic and epistemological field (how did philosophy originate and why did it originate in the wrong way?). In wondering why the arts and the sciences created by the *esprit humain* proceed according to different rhythms (book III, chapter III), Condillac refers on the one hand to the “need to make discoveries” and on the other hand to the “means by which the mistakes we make can be recognised”. Spurred on by this need, the *esprit humain* “gathers observations, formulates hypotheses suggested by these observations, and ends with experiments that confirm or correct the hypotheses” (pp. 27b–28a). This, in general, is the method followed by the human mind, while the rhythm characterising the development of the individual arts and sciences depends upon the “slowness or rapidity with which experience enables us to perceive our mistakes”. In the case of philosophy (understood as “the knowledge of nature – with regard to those things that are within our reach” – by means of “observation aided by analogy”), from the very beginning the philosophers focused their efforts on the aim of “explaining the origin and generation of everything that exists. But they were unable to observe this origin and this generation”, so “they reasoned according to the prejudices they had inherited”. But, “since observation had taught them nothing, experience could neither confirm what they thought they knew nor make them perceive the mistakes they had made. It was therefore impossible for them to make any progress” (p. 29; cf. also p. 53).

In these introductory considerations, in addition to the epistemological premises, let us point out the use of the notion of “need”, which for Condillac constitutes the principle of all action, whether cognitive or practical. Condillac had referred to this principle a few pages earlier in order to explain why the opinions of the ancients appear to share a common foundation even though they were formulated by different peoples who did not communicate with one another: the nature of the needs that exist when societies originate produces analogous “circumstances”, which were seen and judged in a similar way, leading to similar opinions (p. 24; as regards need as the mainspring of knowledge and, in particular, of the separation of ideas into classes, cf. pp. 88a and 90a; as regards the application of the theory of needs to the ethical field, see p. 81, where Condillac establishes the concept of happiness by comparing it with the various opinions of the ancients, and p. 150b, where the criticism of Scholastic ethics gives Condillac the opportunity to explain “the real sources of the principles of morals” grounding them on contractual bases).

In addition to this epistemological perspective, the analysis of the “causes” that determine the progress or non-progress of the development of culture is also conducted on a sociopolitical plane. “But why”, asks Condillac in chapter IX, after presenting the opinions of the most ancient peoples, “did the arts in Egypt and Asia stop advancing after they had progressed? Why, when they had been transported to Greece, did they flourish there more than elsewhere?” (p. 38a). The answer lies in the evolution of early societies: in the beginning there was no difference between the professions (indeed, the citizens were all equally farmers and soldiers), and the “necessary arts” which met the “needs” of the population were appreciated and could make rapid progress. Later on, the professions became more and more specialised and were distributed among the different social classes, thus becoming hereditary and exclusive, and this restriction revealed itself to be detrimental to the development of the “arts”. An additional factor was the cultural protectionism adopted by the ancient Eastern nations, which, “far from transmitting their respective discoveries to one another, did not lead to any commerce of lights but concealed from one another what they thought they knew. It was as though each of them separately possessed the exclusive privilege of being cultured” (p. 39b).

Unlike the Oriental peoples, the Greeks continued to allow free access to the various professions and allowed their knowledge to circulate. The transition to democracy opened up new perspectives to all citizens, and this further increased the development of technologies and the arts; knowledge of the sciences could also disseminate without obstacle because in Greece the priests did not represent a hereditary caste and were not the repositories of learning (pp. 40–41). The connection between political and cultural development comes to the fore here. Indeed, Condillac had intentionally begun his analysis by declaring to his eminent pupil that “reason never slows down in its progress unless it is due to the vices of the government” (p. 38a). Later on – concluding the section on Greek philosophy with some “reflections on the way in which the ancients practiced reasoning” – he credits political circumstances with the “first advances in the art of reasoning”, intended as the act of “comparing ideas in order to move from already known relationships to the discovery of as yet unknown relationships”. “Among the Greeks”, Condillac

observes, “the art of reasoning started together with politics”, and the century of Solon represents the most significant period during this process. Indeed, “in those times, being eloquent required being able to convince a people that tried to throw light on its own objects of interest: it required being able to reason with citizens who were themselves able to reason and who, although they were frequently deceived, found in their love of freedom a strong reason to beware of every sort of surprise” (p. 88a).

In this way it may appear that Condillac was led towards an exaltation of the so-called “Greek miracle”; but his appreciation of Greek society and culture was very limited, precisely on the plane of philosophy, by the epistemological prejudice which inevitably reappears at the end of the chapter: “On the basis of these considerations, we can see how the Greeks were able to improve the arts which had been transmitted to them and how they were able to create new ones. But why are the sciences not all equally indebted to them? Why, after the Greeks, did they remain in a nebulous state for many centuries? And how did they manage to suddenly make extraordinary advances in our age?” (p. 41b). The subsequent treatment of Greek philosophy and then modern thought is intended to answer precisely these questions, which relate to the core of Condillac’s thought.

Given these premises, Condillac’s negative judgement on the philosophy of the Greeks is hardly surprising, though some individual figures are exempted from the systematic criticism which he directs at the *absurdités* of the ancient philosophers. “Do not expect, sir, to find profound knowledge”, he warns his pupil in presenting the Ionic school. “Morals is the only branch the ancient philosophers examined properly. For the rest, they were scarcely geometers, scarcely astronomers, and absolutely not physicists” (p. 47a). Most of all, it is the venerable school of the Pythagoreans which suffers the attacks of the *esprit philosophique*. After describing their lives and their doctrines, Condillac defines them as “nothing other than enthusiasts”; the mere expression *ipse dixit* “would be enough to prove that neither the leader nor the followers knew how to reason”. Pythagoras is therefore described as “an imposter with ambitions to make a name for himself” and his followers are called “enthusiastic fools” (p. 51; the accusation of *enthousiasme*, that is to say, fanaticism, which corresponds to the *Schwärmerei* denounced by the German Enlightenment thinkers, is also aimed at the Cynics and the Stoics: see pp. 60b, 79, 81a).

The doctrines of the Eleatics are considered to be a typical example of the wrong way of reasoning. Indeed, they granted ontological reality to the abstract notion of “world”, conceived of as the “accumulation of all that which exists” (and which, as such, is immutable, just as a library taken as a whole is immutable, independently of the internal movements which can take place inside it). “In this way, these bad metaphysicians removed reality from the only things that possess it, namely, particular things, and it attributed it all to an abstract notion which cannot possess it. It is almost like saying that your library is something and your books are nothing” (p. 53a). Democritus committed the opposite mistake by saying that “there is no reality, properly speaking, unless in atoms and in vacuums, and that sensible things are

not beings but mere collections [of atoms]”. Such a conception leads to scepticism because since we perceive sensible things and not atoms, we are unable to grasp the reality of things (p. 53b).

Condillac places Socrates at the centre of ancient philosophy and depicts him as being very similar to himself. Against the “taste for frivolous studies” which had been disseminated by the sophists (the accusation of *frivolité*, or vanity, is recurrent), Socrates applied a correct method of reasoning, by which he “obliged his interlocutor to define the meaning of words and forcibly led him back to the subject under discussion, or made him fall into obvious contradictions”, compelling him to “observe” and “reflect”. In addition to methodology, the ethical and social aspect is also emphasised: Socrates’ invitation to philosophise was not intended “for school”, but “for civil life”, because “it is more important to know how to live than to be erudite”. “Usefulness was his general rule and, while not rejecting the sciences, he prohibited their ostentation and vanity”. By devoting himself above all to the study of morals, he was “the first to call back men from the search for those things that are useless and outside our understanding and lead them to meditate on those things that are useful and within our reach”, hence we may say that “he was a real Prometheus” (pp. 55–58; see also p. 82a, where the Socratic concept of happiness is revisited from an Enlightenment point of view). Yet this admiration for the man who had achieved mythical status during the century of lights does not come without recognition of his limitations: the Socratic method was effective in removing error and unmasking the sophists, but it did not provide “the rules necessary to lead us to the study of nature”. Indeed, a more constructive attitude would have been very unlikely in that age, “because chance, which prepares for discoveries, had not made the need for experience to be felt, geometry had made little progress, and man could not make use of those instruments which were to prove so helpful in subsequent times” (pp. 88b–89a).

After the death of Socrates, the misuse of language and philosophy reappeared with greater force and resulted in the emergence of a multitude of schools. Particularly worthy of note here is the judgement on Aristippus, whose morals are not considered to be much different from those of Socrates and whose cognitive attitude Condillac much appreciated, making him a distant forerunner of Locke and Condillac himself. Indeed, “he is the first to speak of the senses correctly. He was able to see that they do not deceive us unless in regard to the judgements we add to our sensations; that they are capable of making us know things through their appearances and their relationships with us, but they would be incapable of discovering what things are in themselves; and, finally, that the causes of our sensations are such that we will never know them” (p. 60a). The judgement of Plato, on the other hand, is completely negative, and he is accused of “drawing on all systems without adopting any”. “His opinions are nothing but ravings which would not deserve our attention; but, since these ravings lasted for a long time, it is necessary to make them known” (p. 64a). Condillac’s presentation of the doctrines, however, does not distinguish between Plato and Neoplatonism; the Athenian philosopher is reproached for basing himself on abstract notions, through

which he aimed at “creating contemplative thinkers”, according to a model of life and thought which was antagonistic to Condillac’s views.

The evaluation of Aristotle is more impartial, even though, in Condillac’s eyes, Aristotle did not avoid the mistake of replacing the criticised theories of his predecessors “with notions that are just as nebulous and abstract”. He is judged to be “superior” in rhetoric and poetics; his logic is “not nearly as good”, while his physics is “the most imperfect part of his works”, because just like the other philosophers he preferred “to guess nature” rather than to carry out observation (p. 72b). Condillac’s educational aim is revealed by the emphasis he places on Aristotle’s work as a tutor at the Macedonian court. “Either you will be virtuous, sir, or you will hate your master and tutor”, remarks the abbé philosopher with reference to Alexander’s departure from the moral teaching of his ancient master, and this rigid alternative sounds unintentionally ironical today, considering the modest personality of the heir to the court of Parma compared with the models held up before him (p. 71b).

The schools of the Hellenistic age are judged in various ways. Pyrrhonism is seen as the natural product of an epoch in which the art of reasoning had been neglected, and is traced back to the doctrines of Democritus and the Eleatics (rejecting the evidence of the senses, the latter paved the way for scepticism, as Bayle had already observed: cf. *Models*, II, p. 123). Although it led to some *absurdités* which were dangerous from an ethical and social point of view, Pyrrhonism does not seem to be devoid of sense, because “it was less unreasonable to doubt everything with it than to believe something along with the other philosophers of its century” (p. 75a). The Stoics are therefore the object of radical criticism: their ideal of the wise man is “chimerical” and “hypocritical”; it derives from Cynicism, but the latter, “limiting itself to morals, presents at least the advantage of not going astray amid the principles of cosmogony”, which were penetrated instead by Zeno and his followers; dialectics itself, although it is founded on sensible knowledge, is not taken into consideration (“Zeno says that all our knowledge comes from the senses, but he says this just in order to contradict Plato. Indeed he had no idea of this principle. He would have reasoned more correctly if he had been able to know it and follow its consequences”: pp. 79–80).

On the other hand, Condillac expresses considerable appreciation for the epistemological and moral doctrines of Epicurus who, together with Plato, is given more space than any other ancient philosopher. This anti-Plato figure is represented positively, and his portrait has some features in common with Condillac’s ideal of the *philosophe*: “An enemy of secret [i.e. esoteric] doctrine, he loved clarity and recommended it; he spoke in order to be understood and would have remained clear if he had not undertaken to explain the generation of things. He reflected on the abuses of dialectics and more than any other ancient thinker perceived how our knowledge comes from the senses. He knew how to discern two things in our sensations: perception, which is always true because it only guarantees what we feel; [and] judgement, which can be false when we formulate judgements about what things are in themselves on the basis of our perceptions” (p. 83a). Condillac dwells on Epicurus’ morals, which is “the science in which he reasoned best”. Indeed, he was the first to state that “extremely simple truth” according to which pleasure

constitutes the reason and the purpose of all our actions. Placing himself in a middle position between the Stoics and the Cyrenaics, Epicurus was able to grasp the connection linking pleasure and virtue. “Indeed, is the temperament characterising a virtuous man nothing other than finding pleasure in his duties and only in them? It is therefore for the sake of pleasure that we seek virtue: it is because we like it, and we like it more than other pleasures, that we sacrifice ourselves for it” (p. 83). As if to counterbalance this rehabilitation of Epicurus’ ethics, Condillac then stresses the *absurdité* of his physical and theological principles, pointing out regretfully that if this philosopher “had been more enlightened, he would have offered a just God to the man who performs his duties and would have left all fear for the guilty” (p. 85a). He then presents the Epicurean system and goes on to confute it, since it is “evident” that this Greek philosopher “reasons on words to which he attaches no idea” (p. 87a).

Alexandrian philosophy is considered to be a form of syncretism, the result of an “absurd method”, which “had turned all systems into chaos, where opinions appeared even more confused”. Eclecticism (i.e., Neoplatonism) emerged as an alternative to the syncretistic disputes. From a methodological point of view, it appears to be more valid, but “this project would have been praiseworthy if the systems it drew from had been created with judgement and if it could be said that its choices had been made without prejudice”. Due to the evident lack of these requirements, eclecticism produced nothing but absurdities and arbitrary interpretations of Plato and Aristotle. Since “the ideas of Plato and Pythagoras led naturally to enthusiasm”, these absurdities appeared to a greater degree in Egypt, where superstition predominated. In particular, Neoplatonic ecstasy is defined as the “raving of a weak, credulous imagination heated by a burning sun” (*Cours d’étude*, ed. 1775, X, pp. 15–28). On a completely different plane, even the Romans are not exempt from this merciless criticism: Condillac declares that he will limit himself to presenting the history of the introduction of the Greek schools into Rome, since the Romans cultivated philosophy “using little criticism” and were unable to find either a new truth or a new error (*Cours d’étude*, ed. 1775, IX, pp. 64–81).

Unlike Voltaire and the most radical Enlightenment thinkers, Condillac gives a positive assessment of the function of Christian revelation, which succeeded in destroying the theological and moral prejudices of the ancients in a short period of time. As for the relationship between the new religion and pagan culture, he points out the simplicity with which the Gospels were originally preached: following Christ’s example, the apostles “did not need the artifices of eloquence or the subtle reasonings of philosophy”. These observations sound implicitly like a criticism of the subsequent cultural evolution of Christianity, which strove to find an accord with “the best of what had been said by the philosophers”, in particular the Neoplatonists, thus falling into heresy (*Cours d’étude*, ed. 1775, X, pp. 89–101).

Moving on to the *Histoire moderne*, it is to be noted that the medieval age is viewed from two different perspectives: in book VIII, devoted to “letters in the Middle Ages”, Condillac gives a short but systematic outline of the thought elaborated in this period, characterised by the rise and increasingly negative development of the “bad studies” of the Scholastics. At the end of the subsequent

book IX (devoted to Italy) he briefly reviews the development of medieval culture in order to reconstruct the origin of the new culture, somewhere between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries, marking the end of “bad studies”. The first perspective, however, also looks towards the advent of this new culture, and in the prologue to book VIII it is observed that “the seizure of Constantinople by the Turks brought about a revolution of the minds in Europe; but in order to express a judgement on it, we need to form an idea of the studies cultivated from the sixth century onwards” (*Oeuvres philos.*, II, p. 129a).

This is the clearest case of the application of the general criterion whereby each historical period is presented “genetically” in light of the *révolution* with which it ends. The treatment of medieval thought begins with the Arabs, whose work is judged negatively: while recognizing that they “preserved a spark of knowledge during centuries in which a thick darkness spread everywhere”, Condillac observes that “their method and opinions impeded the human mind; and I truly fear”, he further remarks, drawing a significant parallel, “that the masters teaching today in our schools are, in a certain sense, still Arabs. What is left for us, in effect, when we finish our studies? Futile things, which were given to us as if they were pieces of knowledge, a deep ignorance of the means by which to educate ourselves, and a repugnance for all that which requires assiduous attention” (p. 131a).

The criticisms of Platonism reverberate through the references to the mystical theology of Pseudo-Dionysius, the emanationistic system of John Scottus Eriugena, and the “excessively subtle” dialectic of St Augustine, whose faults the medievals imitated rather than his “excellent qualities” (pp. 131b, 136, 137b–138a). The medieval followers of Aristotle receive a similarly negative treatment on account of their radical methodological inadequacy. The only positive outcome of Scholasticism lies precisely in its extreme negativity, on the basis of a sort of rule that governs historical development, which Condillac hypothesises in an analogy with political regimes: “If you consider what the object of study was during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the method by which it was conducted, as well as the blind prejudice in favour of Aristotle and his commentators, [...] you will understand that the more scholars tried, the more they departed from the true path of knowledge, and you will sympathise with Frederick II who, while seeking to accelerate the progress of the human mind, actually slowed it down. However, his protection [of Aristotelian studies] was not totally ineffective. It was perhaps necessary to get lost in a thousand obscure and tortuous paths in order to finally find a more certain and better illuminated road. Just as anarchy leads to a wise government only when disorder, after reaching its height, finally induces all the citizens to rebellion, so it was necessary to take absurdities to extremes to open up the path to true philosophy, eventually bringing common sense to revolt” (p. 144a).

The study of medieval thought, albeit summary, is therefore justified by Condillac for its role as a negative example, since it allows us “to get to know the vices of the human mind” and to work back to their causes. He points out, for example, that in order to establish a correct curriculum of studies it is necessary to completely reverse the order followed by Scholasticism, that is to say, to begin with observation (rather than abstract ideas and general principles) and move progressively through

physics and then metaphysics to the “art of reasoning”, and finally to the “art of speaking”, namely the study of logic and grammar, which the Scholastics, to the contrary, took as the starting point of education. This sequence, which is the most natural and the most suitable for education, had been adopted in the past by the Greeks and is confirmed by the *histoire de l’esprit humain* (p. 153).

The theoretical context underlying Condillac’s position becomes clear again in his interpretation of the rise of modern culture. His historical analysis is based on the notion of “taste”, which, “among all the faculties of the soul, is the first that must be developed”, and which therefore precedes the development of the art of reasoning: as the Greeks had shown, the birth of poetry precedes and prepares for the birth of philosophy (p. 161a). The “rebirth of letters”, therefore, did not originate in the monasteries and schools, but precisely in that people who, due to favourable historical circumstances, were the first to be able to cultivate the new poetry in the vernacular tongue: these were the Provençals, who later disseminated the taste for poetry to Italy and above all to Florence, where wealth was united with the “love of freedom”. The sudden appearance of “taste” in Italy is ascribed to the three “Tuscan geniuses”, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio; taste “is precisely the dawn of the day that must enlighten the human mind”, whose “first rays” half-reveal “the hideous shape of Scholasticism”. The rapid success achieved by these great men is due to the fact that taste corresponds to the *vérités de sentiment*, which (unlike the *vérités de raison*) “are inside us, or they are not at all, so that to approach them or to perceive them is the same. One can reason using one’s own mind, without thereby becoming enlightened; but one cannot move my soul in a new and pleasant way, without me immediately perceiving beauty. Taste is therefore a feeling that must be transmitted promptly” and “it moves immediately from one genre to another” (pp. 162b–166b, 173a; as regards the definition of *goût*, see the *Dictionnaire des synonymes*, in *Oeuvres philos.*, III, pp. 302–303, as well as the ‘Index des notions’, p. 596).

The rebirth of letters, therefore, began in Italy long before the fall of Constantinople, the cultural effects of which Condillac strongly contests. Against the traditional theory which considered this event to be the decisive factor in the development of the new culture, Condillac points out that, “struck by a revolution that gave Europe a new face, we have maintained that this revolution [also] influenced the progress of the mind, because we suppose that it did everything. The Italians, however, like the Greeks, educated themselves and owed very little, if anything, to foreigners. On the contrary, it is certain that the fall of Constantinople slowed them down because the Greek language, which it became fashionable to study, led to a neglect of the vernacular tongues”. From this point of view, the invention of printing itself had a negative effect, because the ease of access to Greek books induced the Italians to pass over the study of their own language and disseminate “pedantry” (pp. 166b–167b).

These brief judgements, which conclude the chapter on the “state of the arts and the sciences in Italy” between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries, are developed at greater length in the initial chapter of book XX, ‘Revolutions brought about in the domain of letters by the Greeks who took refuge in Italy...’. The title should not deceive us, however: indeed “those Greeks, attributed with inspiring



the rebirth of letters, spread over Italy like a cloud and intercepted the light which had just dawned". In the fifteenth century above all, Italians were possessed by the "fanaticism of erudition" and the "prejudice of Antiquity". The "fashion for erudite languages" negatively affected the "advancement of taste" because "languages have elegance only in the measure to which there is elegance in the minds of those who speak them". This refinement of the *esprit* could only have come from a joint, comparative study of the classical and vernacular tongues. This enabled scholars both "to read the ancients with greater understanding" and to increase the qualities of "subtlety, delicacy, and precision" in the vernacular tongues, improvements which allowed us to "conceive things" better and consequently to enrich our patrimony of ideas. And since the perfecting of taste precedes that of the other faculties, "it was hardly possible for man to be capable of reasoning during these centuries, in which the study of Greek and Latin degenerated into a mania. In fact, nothing was more miserable and absurd than the forms of reasoning which were formulated at times even by the best minds. Lacking discernment and criticism, they became similar to common people, exposed to the risk of the grossest prejudices" (pp. 173–176).

In reconstructing that crucial phenomenon that was the *renaissance des lettres*, therefore, Condillac does not adopt the most obvious and common form of interpretation, in which a great *révolution* on a political plane (in this particular case, the fall of Constantinople) was paralleled by an equally radical *révolution* on a cultural plane. The historical and political framework which we would today call *événementiel* is replaced by a theoretical one, in which Condillac's linguistic, aesthetic, and epistemological ideas can be concretely applied. That awareness of the 'difference' between the "century of erudition" (the sixteenth century) and the "century of philosophy" (the seventeenth century), which was already clearly present in Bayle and before him in Rapin and Horn (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 115–116), now has a definite critical weight, also because the term 'philosophical century', as we shall see below, extends chronologically to the eighteenth century, though restricting its ambit to a very precise methodological perspective.

In the philosophical landscape of the sixteenth century, characterised by the "absurdities" and the "fanaticism" of the two opposing parties (the Scholastics and the "Latinists", who were passionate followers of Cicero), the only positive figure is Erasmus, "the only one who really distinguished himself for his taste and for the justice of his mind" (p. 177a). In particular, Condillac appreciates Erasmus's tolerant attitude towards the Lutherans, even though he condemned their mistakes, and he observes that an appropriate reform of abuses might have put out the fire of the Reformation from the start, but this would have required "sacrificing the interests of the popes, the monks, and the Scholastics in many things" (p. 179). As for the philosophical schools of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, they had all been corrupted by prejudice against the ancients, who drove us onto the same rocks they had grounded us on before, and so "they merely taught us to go astray confidently". Only a total departure from Peripateticism and Scholasticism could have paved the way for the development of the mind. The first to confute Aristotle "solidly" was Telesio, but in the end he too imbued reality with vague notions and pure abstractions, thus reviving the school of Parmenides. As for Giordano

Bruno, he possessed “little judgement” and a “disorderly imagination”, and his philosophical system was full of “confused, absurd, and contradictory ideas which were contrary both to reason and faith”. Bruno’s works, however, contain theories which other philosophers claimed credit for, such as the evaluation of doubt as the “preliminary precaution in the search for truth”, and the explanation of the motion of celestial bodies by means of vortices (a clear reference to Descartes: pp. 184a–185a; cf. Parenti, ‘Il pensiero storico’, p. 39; Guerici, *Condillac*, pp. 17–18).

The radical turning point in the history of thought, involving a rejection of the authority of the ancients, took place gradually over the course of the seventeenth century. The philosophers of this period “still insisted on seeking some knowledge in Greek thought”, in some cases they did so by adhering to a school, in other cases by adopting an eclectic attitude, or by “deluding themselves into making up for the supposed deficiencies of the ancient systems with their imagination”. But “thanks to chance or curiosity, observations were carried out now and then [...]. Gross mistakes in the ancients were discovered and then were confirmed thanks to correctly conducted observations. Finally, little by little, the conviction arose that in order to know nature it is necessary to study it” (pp. 185b–186a). A definite improvement took place with the adoption of the inductive method, when we started to “suspect that the path we had taken does not lead to truth; that, since we were extremely curious to know how everything had been formed, we also became too convinced that we were made for guessing how; and, consequently, instead of starting from the causes and working down to the effects, perhaps it would be better to start from the effects to work up to the causes” (pp. 187b–188a). Once again we have here an ‘explanation’ which is based on a logical framework rather than on strictly historical facts, even though Condillac had just mentioned the Thirty Years’ War as a “favourable circumstance for combating Peripateticism” (“Since the public concerned itself with more important matters, it no longer paid much heed to the disputes in the schools. The theologians were given less attention and therefore became less dangerous: thought started to be characterised by greater freedom. Indeed, it was between 1620 and 1630 that the first works against Aristotle’s physics appeared”: p. 186b).

The idea of a necessarily gradual evolution towards “true philosophy” finds confirmation in the interpretation of Descartes. While criticising the adoption of “vague notions and sheer conjectures” as principles, Descartes made the same mistake when he elaborated his system of the world, which would meet with enormous success. Condillac painstakingly searches for the reasons for this success on a psychological plane. “This fiction, which was ingeniously illustrated, seemed at first sight to provide explanations for phenomena. Or at least it allowed us to imagine a sort of mechanism which could be indistinctly grasped, while nothing at all could be discerned in the other systems. It was within everybody’s reach. It was enough to read it for a few minutes to understand the reasons for all the motion in the universe. It therefore enjoyed the greatest success. It is difficult to destroy a system once it has established itself, because when an illusion satisfies our curiosity, it becomes dearer to us every day; and when we believe we have learnt something, it is hard to admit that we know nothing”. Condillac, however, concedes the Cartesian

system “the glory of having finally stifled Peripateticism, this hydra whose heads fell off only to reproduce themselves again”. This result was achieved precisely due to the success of Descartes’ theories: “In order to convince the Scholastics to abandon their mistakes, it was necessary to provide them with some other mistakes; and I believe that if vortices had met with less success, Peripateticism would still be taught today. Moreover, it is to be noted that Descartes’ mistakes represented a step towards the truth [ . . . ]. By according preference to this fiction, which was considered to be clearer, men became accustomed to seeking the light” (p. 189).

The outline of the philosophical opinions of the seventeenth century is brought to completion by two trends which, although very different, are both based on observation of the insufficiency of human reason and come to equally misleading results. The first is “Mosaic philosophy”, also known as English Neoplatonism, which is traced back in time to Zoroaster’s emanationistic principle, and which looks to Scripture to find confirmation of its opinions on the origin of the universe and the explanation of physical phenomena; its “extravagant mysticism” developed into quietism. The second is scepticism, arising from observation of the many mistakes which have been made and the battle of opinions. Both these trends are vigorously criticised by Condillac, who attacks Bayle in particular, “the most ingenious sophist who ever existed”, a man devoted to books rather than to deep reflection, and a follower of Montaigne, defined as “a witty writer and a Pyrrhonian through laziness” (pp. 189b–191a). In this survey the two major philosophers whose positions Condillac had discussed in the *Traité des systèmes* are missing: namely Spinoza and Leibniz. In reality, what the French abbé is now more concerned with are not so much the *égarements* of the most recent philosophers – who are the last, in chronological order, of a very long series – as the beginnings of “true philosophy”, which are rooted in the same period in which “Bayle taught Pyrrhonism” and “imagination misled the most renowned philosophers” (p. 191). This broad outline of the achievements of modern science culminates with Newton’s theory of universal gravity and is accompanied by a ‘Consideration on the advances of the sciences and letters’, and a specific chapter concerning the “progress of politics” from the ancient age up to Grotius, Hobbes, and Pufendorf.

Analysis of a more strictly historico-philosophical nature is resumed towards the end of book XX, the last of the *Histoire moderne*, in the chapter concerning the “progress of the art of reasoning”, where the thought of the seventeenth century is presented positively. The introduction contains references to the principles of Condillac’s “analysis of ideas” (understood not as a science separate from the other sciences but as the “true method” applicable to all the sciences, based on psychology, namely, the science dealing with the origin and generation of all our ideas). It is then observed that a method for reasoning correctly was only developed properly during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first great master was obviously Bacon, who by observing the “deviations of the human mind” taught us to avoid the paths that lead to error. The Baconian method is presented by extensive quotes from the *Novum organum*, but this admiration for the English philosopher does not prevent Condillac from mentioning some debatable aspects of Bacon’s thought. In particular, he wonders “whether, by subdividing the sciences and the arts

according to the three faculties of the intellect (memory, imagination, and reason), [Bacon] followed the simplest and most natural order. This subdivision is at the very least totally arbitrary”, continues Condillac, “and it seems to me that it would have been better to consider the sciences in themselves: they get confused when we separate them according to three faculties which are not concerned with totally different objects and whose collaboration is instead necessary to all our studies”. The very reduction of the faculties of the intellect to three is viewed as the result of “analysis conducted in an approximate fashion”, which is accepted only because of convention (p. 230b). This criticism is particularly interesting if we consider that the three-fold division of the faculties was at the basis of the *Encyclopédie* itself.

As for Descartes’ method, “the prejudice of innate ideas did not allow him to reason in all the sciences as correctly as he did in geometry”; indeed, he did not take care to describe the modalities for applying the criterion of evidence with precision, or to define exactly what an idea is (p. 233b). But the first to indicate the right path for a correct analysis of the human intellect was Locke, for whom Condillac expresses his admiration. Nevertheless, the praise of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is accompanied by a list of its faults and limitations, which had already been pointed out in the introduction to the *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines*: the absence of order and a more rigorous method, the failure to refer all our ideas and the workings of the soul to sensation, and the reduction of “evidence” to “identity” . . . (p. 234a). With this reference to Condillac’s fundamental inspiration, the cycle described by philosophy, the history of philosophy, and philosophy is closed, with the ‘simplicity’ and ‘clarity’ which are the distinguishing features and at the same time the limits of Condillac’s reflection.

**2.4.4.4** Since they are intended to be *abrégés* with an educational and formative function, the sections of the *Cours d’études* on the history of philosophy do not aim to analyse systems in detail, but principally to draw useful ‘lessons’ from them. To this end, presentations that are more strictly informative alternate with specific chapters containing *réflexions* or *considérations*, in which – following a typically French tradition that goes back to Rapin and Deslandes – the author provides brief thematic summaries which are an opportunity for critical discussions in which he presents his positions in a more direct and articulate manner. The main source is Brucker, who is explicitly mentioned at the beginning of the treatment (*Oeuvres philos.*, II, p. 30b: “I will present the opinions of peoples and philosophers according to the history of philosophy written by Monsieur Brucker”); but for the Patristic and medieval age, Condillac also turns to writers of civil and ecclesiastical history, such as Fleury, Tillemont, and Du Pin.

The biographies of the philosophers are usually presented concisely (with some exceptions, like Plato). The only thinkers whose works are quoted are Socrates (a series of his maxims), Epicurus, and Bacon, that is to say, the most ‘recommendable’ philosophers before Locke. In reconstructing their developments of thought, Condillac often mentions historical “circumstances”: this term is characteristic of Brucker (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 539–540) who used it, however, with reference above all to the biographical information, while Condillac seems rather to follow the

historiographical ideas of Montesquieu and Voltaire. As for the most distant period, he has recourse to “conjectures”, the use of which is explained at the beginning of the *Histoire ancienne* as an application of the general principles set out in the *Art de raisonner* (*Oeuvres philos.*, II, pp. 11–12: ‘Des conjectures dans l’étude de l’histoire’; as for the conjectures relating to the doctrines of more ancient peoples, see pp. 25b, 31a, 32a, 33b, 37b, 43–44, 47b...; for a comparison with the *theoretical history* of English authors, see below, 7, Introd., § 4). The history of philosophy outlined within the framework of the *Introduction à l’étude de l’histoire* therefore presents the characteristics of a true *histoire critique et raisonnée*.

**2.4.5** As we know, Condillac’s theories, and above all his method of “analysis”, enjoyed great success in France – where they became the “philosophical Gospel” for around half a century (Franck, I, p. 551) – as well as in Italy. This success was due to their qualities of *clarté*, psychological subtlety, and methodological rigour, but also to the apparently ‘easy’ way in which Condillac presented his viewpoint and his mid-way position between the ideological groups: a friend of the *philosophes*, he gained their support while remaining cautiously detached from the “boutique encyclopédique” (Vernière, p. 466), with his spiritualistic and Christian positions existing alongside the psychological audacity and the anti-clerical allusions that are so frequent in the *Histoire moderne*. It is in the context of this success that we should view the *Cours d’études*, a work in which Condillac’s teaching abilities and pedagogical tendencies are tightly interwoven with his epistemological theories. The work was particularly welcomed by the *Journal encyclopédique*, which summarised it at length, though the presentation of ancient philosophy was limited to the *considérations* on happiness and the relationship between languages and opinions, which were evidently considered to be closer to readers’ taste (JE, 1776, II/3, pp. 442–449). In Italy, where the *Cours d’études* was reviewed in the *Giornale de’ letterati* of Pisa, the “istoria delle antiche opinioni” was presented in detail and considered to be an “istoria delle operazioni dell’intelletto” (GL, XXX (1778), pp. 3–33).

A highly positive judgement on the history course was expressed by Garat, one of the first generation of *idéologues* (Picavet, p. 160), while in a letter dated October 1780, Condorcet described the work, together with Millot’s *Éléments d’histoire générale* (1772–1773), as “reasonable and well written books, but nothing more” (Baker, *Un “Éloge”*, p. 51 note). As for the two textbooks of history that are also mentioned here, it must be noted that the Italian translation of Millot’s *Éléments* contains several additions taken from the *Introduction à l’étude de l’histoire*. For example, it quotes Condillac’s chapter on the philosophy of the Romans in full, while in the ‘Avvertimento del Volgarizzatore’ a comparison is made between the two works, and it is observed that the abbé Millot is superior in “relating facts”, but is surpassed by Condillac in “reasoning on these facts” (C.-F.-X. Millot, *Elementi di storia generale antica e moderna. Opera [...] recata nell’italiano da L.A. Loschi, con varie aggiunte ed annotazioni*, Venice: G. Storti, 1777–1778, III, pp. IV and 223–239; a very concise survey of the main Greek sects appears in vol. II, pp. 134–149, where the greatest amount of space is devoted to Pythagoras, defined as

a “reformer of customs”).<sup>8</sup> From an educational point of view, let us point out the addition aimed at providing extra reading on the historical and cultural sections of the history course in the first two of the three volumes of a compilation of texts edited by a certain R. Noël, professor of philosophy at the military college of Saint Cyr (*Logique de Condillac, à l’usage des élèves des Prytanées et Lycées de la République Française*, Paris: Dufart, an XI-1802, I, pp. 95–225, where the history of Greek philosophy is quoted in full; II, pp. 191–407 and 425–442, reproducing volumes VIII and XX of the *Histoire moderne* and the chapters on the ancient philosophies of the East).

Degérando was the first to make a specific evaluation of Condillac’s work on the history of philosophy, comparing the *Traité des systèmes* and the *Cours d’études*: in the *Traité*, the few systems analysed are taken “as examples rather than as historical elements; he uses them to highlight the fault of methods based on an exclusive use of abstract principles, and he has made no attempt to establish either the link that joins them together or the consequences of their being in contrast”. Degérando admits however that “these examples are well chosen and are presented with the talent proper to this renowned writer” (Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, pp. 135–136). The *Traité des systèmes*, whose author certainly did not wish it to be viewed as a history of philosophy, is therefore interpreted by Degérando from a historiographical perspective, with the aim of emphasising the differences between this work and his own *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie*; indeed the introduction to the latter makes it clear that the work “bears no analogy at all with Condillac’s *Traité des systèmes*, as the title might perhaps induce us to suppose” (Degérando<sup>1</sup>, I, pp. XXVI–XXVII).

Degérando’s judgement becomes more critical towards the history course: “In his *Cours d’études*, he dealt with the opinions of the ancient philosophers by expanding his plan, but he reduced his presentation of the systems; what is more, he did not bring to it particularly profound or impartial views; he often makes us doubt whether he really has gone back to the sources; he judges rather than narrates, and often expresses too severe disapproval” (Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, p. 136). This judgement is taken up again and developed in a *remarque*, in which we can already clearly see the accusation of anti-historicity which was to become a *Leitmotiv* in nineteenth- (and in part also twentieth-) century historiography on the Enlightenment. After observing that “Condillac, like Diderot, only used second-hand materials, and presumably even borrowed them from the same collection” (a reference to Brucker), Degérando reiterates that this author “gave in too often to a certain epigrammatic inclination which sometimes leads him to astonishing exaggerations and to a regular prejudice

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<sup>8</sup>On Millot, who was appointed to teach history in Parma after the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1768, see Guerci, *Condillac storico*, pp. 96–108; O. Penke, ‘L’abbé Millot et l’historiographie des Lumières françaises’, *Acta Romanica*, VII (1982), pp. 339–387. Note that abbé Millot is also considered to be the author of the *Histoire philosophique de l’homme* (London: Nourse, 1766, pp. 290), which is an individual history, — like Condillac’s — of the “véritable marche de l’esprit humain”, that is to say a psychological ‘history’ of the development of the human faculties.

against the philosophy of Antiquity; he almost entirely passed over the philosophy of the Middle Ages; finally, he made a great mistake, he placed himself with all the ideas of modern times in the midst of the systems of Antiquity, far from identifying himself with the spirit of their authors, as would have been necessary. This analytic mind, constantly surrounded by exact notions and rigorous methods, formulates judgements in a way that is too severe and too absolute". Yet, Degérando's criticisms come with an acknowledgement of the validity of that lesson on style and above all method (understood in an epistemological and not a historiographical sense) which the *idéologues* learned from Condillac: "Indeed, in their conciseness, his accounts have the outstanding merit of clarity and although he is not always just towards the authors who made the discoveries, [nevertheless] thanks to his faultless discernment he unmasks the origin of the mistakes and defects of bad methods" (Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, p. 181; cf. Degérando<sup>1</sup>, I, pp. 49–52). The criticism formulated by Cousin is shorter but much more pithy; according to him, "the assertions concerning certain systems which Condillac has interspersed [through his text]" certainly do not represent a history of philosophy (Cousin, p. 322).

In substance, Degérando's evaluation is not far removed from the judgements expressed in more recent times by Dal Pra (*Condillac*, pp. 272 and 275, where the author points out the summary and often superficial character of the historical-philosophical treatment, reflecting "the anti-historical mentality of the Enlightenment") and Braun (pp. 157–158) who observes, in conclusion, that "despite the insignificant historical value" of the *Cours d'études*, it deserves to be mentioned in a history of philosophical historiography due to the success enjoyed by its author during the second half of the eighteenth century and its contribution to the spread of the *esprit des lumières*. In reality, more than its historiographical shortcomings, we should focus our attention on the 'philosophical' character of the *Cours d'études* because this work offers perhaps the most representative instance of the way in which French Enlightenment culture approached the philosophical past. In particular, we should note the specific nature of the historico-philosophical operation undertaken by Condillac: an operation which, using information taken from the erudite tradition, aims at interpreting the development of thought in the light of a certain epistemological and linguistic theory, which is applied to the entire spectrum of the products of the *esprit humain*, and not only to that privileged section represented by 'philosophy' understood in a traditional sense. In this operation it is possible to see a shift in the 'place' of the historiography of philosophy. If Heumann and Brucker had advocated a transition from the erudite to the more strictly philosophical domain, now Condillac moves on to the field of the emerging human sciences, in which the psychological themes of the origin and composition of ideas and the analysis of the connections between language and opinions take the central position formerly occupied by ancient metaphysics. This represents the full realisation of the shift that had already been present in Deslandes, albeit in an occasional and disjointed form, since Deslandes did not have a rigorous philosophical and methodological conception to draw on (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 203–204).

**2.4.6** On Condillac's life, works, and thought: Franck, I, pp. 543–551; K.-M. Baker, 'Un "Éloge" officieux de Condorcet: sa *Notice historique et critique sur Condillac*', *Revue de Synthèse*, s. III, nos. 47–48 (1967), pp. 227–251; Cioranescu, pp. 571–574; Picavet, *passim*; M. Dal Pra, 'Il *Cours d'études* di Condillac nuova enciclopedia del sapere' and 'P. Andrea Mazza: *Osservazioni sul Cours d'études di Condillac*', in Id., *Logica esperienza e prassi* (Naples, 1976), pp. 59–79 and 161–176; Capone Braga, I, pp. 98–159; G. Le Roy, 'Introduction à l'oeuvre philosophique de Condillac', in *Oeuvres philos.*, I, pp. VII–XXXV; III, pp. 569–574 (bibliography); P. Salvucci, *Condillac filosofo della comunità umana* (Milan, 1961); L. Guerci, 'La composizione e le vicende editoriali del *Cours d'études* di Condillac', in *Miscellanea Walter Maturi* (Turin, 1966), pp. 185–220; R. Lefèvre, *Condillac ou la joie de vivre* (Paris, 1966); I.F. Knight, *The Geometric Spirit. The Abbé de Condillac and the French Enlightenment* (New Haven and London, 1968); S. Moravia, *Il pensiero degli ideologues. Scienza e filosofia in Francia (1780–1815)* (Florence, 1974), pp. 291–318; E. Mc Niven Hine, *A Critical Study of Condillac's Traité des systèmes* (The Hague and Boston, 1979); *Corpus Condillac (1714–1780)*, ed. J. Sgard (Geneva and Paris, 1981); P. Petacco, 'Tre lettere inedite di Condillac e notizie sull'edizione bodoniana del *Cours d'étude*', *Studi francesi*, XXVI (1982), pp. 54–62; J. Derrida, *The Archeology of Frivolous. Reading Condillac* (Lincoln, Ne., 1987); *Condillac. L'origine du langage*, ed. A. Bertrand (Paris, 2002); C. Hobbs, *Rhetoric on the Margin of Modernity: Vico, Condillac, Monboddo* (Carbon-dale, Ill., 2002); A. Charrak, *Empirisme et métaphysique. L'Essai sur les origines des connaissances humaines de Condillac* (Paris, 2003); R. Fanari, 'La visione enciclopedica del sapere nel *Cours d'étude pour l'instruction du Prince de Parme*', in *Enciclopedia ed enciclopediaismi nell'età moderna e contemporanea*, ed. A. Loche (Cagliari, 2008), pp. 161–170; Ead., *Condillac. Ontologia ed empirismo* (Rome, 2009); V. Mudroch, in Ueberweg, II/1, pp. 430–459; J. Schwegman, 'The "System" as a Reading Technology. Pedagogy and Philosophical Criticism in Condillac's *Traité des systèmes*', *J. Hist. Ideas*, LXXI (2010), pp. 387–410.

On his historiographical and historico-philosophical works: M. Dal Pra, *Condillac* (Milan, 1942), pp. 269–275; Vernière, pp. 466–475; Simone, pp. 427–432; R. Parenti, 'Il pensiero storico di Condillac', *Riv. crit. Stor. Filos.*, XVII (1962), pp. 167–179 and 309–320; XVIII (1963), pp. 32–43; Garin, *La storia "critica"*, pp. 274 and 281; Rétat, pp. 293–298; Braun, pp. 156–158; E. Nuzzo, *L'"ultimo" Condillac e il mondo della storia* (Naples, 1973); Del Torre, *Le origini moderne*, p. 140; Dagen, pp. 96–108; L. Guerci, *Condillac storico. Storia e politica nel Cours d'études pour l'instruction du Prince de Parme* (Milan and Naples, 1978) (on pp. 25–26, the author declares that his treatment omits the chapters on the history of philosophy and *lettres*, except for a short remark on the evaluation of the Renaissance, on pp. 319–320); Id., 'Mably collaboratore di Condillac. Il *De l'étude de l'histoire* e il *Cours d'études*', in *La politica della ragione. Studi sull'illuminismo francese*, ed. P. Casini (Bologna, 1978), pp. 135–165; M.F. Spallanzani, 'Leggi naturali e leggi storiche in Condillac', *Ibid.*, pp. 167–186; M.F. O'Meara, 'The Language of



History and the Place of Power. Male and Female Versions of Condillac's *Histoire ancienne et moderne*', in *Discours et pouvoirs*, ed. R. Chambers (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1982), pp. 177–204; Gueroult, I, pp. 309–326; Piaia, "Vestigia philosophorum", pp. 148–149 and 157; F. Crispini, 'Intellectual History, History of Ideas, History of Linguistic Ideas. The Case of Condillac', in *Historical Roots of Linguistic Theories*, D. Gambarara and L. Formigari eds. (Amsterdam, 1995), pp. 141–150; P. Laurendeau, 'Condillac contre Spinoza. Une critique nominaliste des glottognoses', *Histoire, épistémologie, langage*, XXII, no. 2 (2000), pp. 41–80; Lotterie, *Progrès et perfectibilité*, pp. 3–4, 13–16 and 23–24; G. Barbini, *Il lusso. La civilizzazione in un dibattito del XVIII secolo* (Padua, 2009), pp. 398–402.

On the reception of the *Cours d'études: Corr. litt.*, XI, pp. 109 (August, 1775) and 167 (December, 1775); JE, 1776, II/3, pp. 441–449 (on Greek philosophy); III/2, pp. 212–215 (on medieval culture); III/3, pp. 414–420 (on modern thought); GL, XXX (1778), pp. 3–33 (on ancient philosophy); ME, 1797, IV, p. 559; ELR, 1780, IX, pp. 350–352; 1781, X, pp. 43–44, 191–192, 331; La Harpe, *Lycée* (Paris, 1799–1805), XV, pp. 213–214.

## 2.5 Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas Caritat de Condorcet (1743–1794)

### *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*

Gregorio Piaia

**2.5.1** The marquis de Condorcet was born in Ribemont (northern France) on 17th September, 1743. His father died soon after his birth, and his mother lavished him with attention, which nurtured his sensitive temperament. He was educated by the Jesuits and at the age of fifteen moved to the *Collège de Navarre* in Paris, where he distinguished himself in mathematical studies. In 1762 he settled in Paris, abandoning the idea of a military career which his family had mapped out for him. His presentation of the *Essai sur le calcul intégral* (1765) before the *Académie des sciences* attracted the attention of intellectual circles and earned him the friendship and protection of D'Alembert, Helvétius, and Turgot, which in turn gave him access to the *salon* of M<sup>lle</sup> de Lespinasse. In 1769 he was admitted to the *Académie des sciences* as an "associate member" and he became an assistant to the permanent secretary, the astronomer Jean-Paul Grandjean de Fouchy, whom he would come to replace in this position in 1785. After Turgot became minister of finance (1774) Condorcet was appointed Inspector General of the *Monnaie* and radically defended the new economic policy, which was soon abandoned in May 1776, with Turgot's resignation and the arrival of Necker. In 1782, supported by D'Alembert, he was admitted to the *Académie Française*, and 4 years later he married the young Marie-Louise-Sophie de Grouchy. Their *salon*, in the apartment they occupied in the *Hotel de la Monnaie*, became one of the most important meeting places in Paris during the age of the *lumières*.

In 1788 Condorcet became a member of the *Société des amis des noirs*, which opposed slavery and the slave trade. During the Revolution, his intense political involvement came to a dramatic end when he died in mysterious circumstances. A member of the Paris town Assembly (1789), in the spring of 1790, together with Sieyès, he founded the *Société de 1789* and then joined the Jacobins club. On 26th September, 1791 he was elected to the Legislative Assembly, of which he became secretary, then vice-president, then president. He was a member of the Committee of Public Instruction, before which he presented his famous *Rapport et projet de décret sur l'organisation générale de l'instruction publique*. Also elected to the Convention, Condorcet adopted an autonomous stance with respect to both the Girondists and the Montagnards, and when Louis XVI was brought to trial he voted for life imprisonment, as opposed to the death sentence. After the Montagnards seized power, the political situation changed rapidly. Declared under arrest (8th July, 1793) for having written a pamphlet criticising the new constitution, he took refuge in the house of M<sup>me</sup> Vernet, and during this enforced seclusion he wrote the *Esquisse d'un tableau historique*. He was outlawed by a decree dated 13th March, 1794; so as not to implicate M<sup>me</sup> Vernet, he left her house (25th March), and after hiding in the countryside for 2 days he was finally arrested in a tavern in Clamart. He was taken to the prison of Bourg-la-Reine, where he was found dead on the morning of 29th March. The traditional view of these events, dating from 1795, is that he killed himself with a poison prepared for him by Cabanis.

**2.5.2** Condorcet's literary activity began with several publications of a scientific nature, but developed at the same time in other quite different fields. His work in the *Académie des sciences* is related not only to his studies in mathematics, astronomy, and hydraulics, but also to some of his *discours* and to his long series of "praises": *Éloges des académiciens de l'Académie Royale des Sciences morts depuis 1666 jusqu'en 1699* (Paris, 1773); *Éloges des académiciens [...] morts depuis 1666 jusqu'en 1790* (Brunswick and Paris, 1799), 5 Vols in sextodecimo format. The latter collection also contained the *Éloge de Pascal* added as a preface to an edition of the *Pensées* edited by Condorcet himself, which was published in 1776 and reprinted in 1778 with some additions written by Voltaire. These works can be mentioned together with the *Vie de M. Turgot* (London, 1786) and the *Vie de Voltaire*, written for the Kehl edition (1784–1789) of the *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, of which Condorcet was co-editor.

The year 1774 marked the beginning of Condorcet's direct engagement in the battle waged by the *philosophes* and in the economic and political debate. Indeed, that year saw the publication of the *Lettre d'un théologien à l'auteur du "Dictionnaire des trois siècles littéraires"* (against abbé Sabatier de Castres, who had engaged in a polemic with the *philosophes*, in particular Voltaire) and the *Lettre sur le commerce des grains*, in support of Turgot's economic policy. His activity as a political writer became more intense after 1789 and also developed in the field of journalism: Condorcet was among the founders of the *Bibliothèque de l'homme public, ou Analyse raisonnée des principaux ouvrages français et étrangers sur la politique en général, la législation, les finances* (1790–1792) and collaborated on *Le Moniteur* (1788), the *Chronique de Paris* (1791–1793), *Le républicain, ou le*

*défenseur du gouvernement représentatif* (1791), the *Chronique du mois, ou les cahiers patriotiques* (1791–1793), and the *Journal d'instruction sociale* (1793).

He finished writing the *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* on 4th October, 1793; his wife had the work printed posthumously in Paris, by the publisher Agasse, in year III of the Republic (1795); it was reprinted four times up to 1798; an additional edition, without the place of publication or the name of the printer, appeared in 1795. During the nineteenth century it was reprinted several times and was also included in the edition of the *Oeuvres complètes de Condorcet* (Paris, 1804, 21 Vols) edited by M<sup>me</sup> Condorcet, Barbier, Cabanis, and Garat, as well as in the subsequent new edition of the *Oeuvres* – 12 Vols, edited by his son-in-law, Arthur O'Connor (O'Connor Condorcet), and by François Arago – which came out in Paris in the years 1847–1849.

The *Esquisse* was immediately translated and published in English (the translator remained anonymous): *Outlines of an Historical View of the Progress of the Human Mind* (London and Glasgow: J. Johnson, 1795; repr. Chicago: G. Langer, 2009; here we will refer to the latter edition). This translation was also published in Philadelphia (Lang and Ulrich, 1796), then in Baltimore (G. Fryer, 1802). A new English translation, edited by J. Barraclough, appeared in the mid-twentieth century: *Sketch for an Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1955). The work was also immediately translated into German (1795), then into Italian (1797). It must be remembered that the *Esquisse* (or *Prospectus*, according to the title in Condorcet's manuscript version) had been planned as an introduction to a more extensive and general work, the *Tableau des progrès de l'esprit humain*, which was however not completed. Numerous fragments of this project have come down to us and are preserved in ms. 885 of the *Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France* and in ms. Fonds Fr. Nouv. Acq. 4586 of the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris; they were published only partially in vol. VI of the *Oeuvres* (ed. 1847–1849); but see now *Tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain. Projets, Esquisses, Fragments et Notes* (1772–1774), ed. J.-P. Schandeler (Paris, 2004).

**2.5.3** Defined by Hippolyte Taine as a “philosophical testament” of the eighteenth century, the *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* brings together and develops some of the most typical elements of the philosophy produced during the age of the lumières. In particular – and more profoundly than Voltaire, D'Alembert, Turgot, or Condillac – Condorcet manages to fuse the psychological and epistemological perspective with the historical dimension, thus creating an organic philosophy of the political, social, and cultural development of humanity on sensationalist bases. This approach is already outlined in the introductory pages of the *Esquisse*, where – after mentioning the essential features of an epistemology and an ethics founded on the faculties of receiving and combining sensations and, through them, experiencing pleasure or pain – Condorcet clearly distinguishes two methods of approach which correspond to the two dimensions (the psychological and individual, and the historical and social) regulating human development. “Were we to confine our observations to an enquiry into the general facts and unvarying

laws which the development of these faculties presents to us, in what is common to the different individuals of the human species, our enquiry would bear the name of *metaphysics*. But if we consider this development in its results, relative to the mass of individuals coexisting at the same time in a given space, and follow it from generation to generation, it then exhibits a *picture of the progress of human intellect*. This progress is subject to the same general laws, observable in the individual development of our faculties; being the result of that very development considered at once in a great number of individuals united in society” (*Outlines*, ed. 2009, p. 3; italics ours; the meaning of *esprit*, in its individual sense, is made clear by Condorcet himself in an unpublished *Note sur le mot âme, esprit*, on which see Cento, *Condorcet*, pp. 75–78).

The “historical view” reconstructed in the process of linking epochs and events is inspired by an awareness that the path taken by human beings has a well-defined meaning, since we are capable of knowing where we come from and where we are going. This general picture must “show, by the modifications which the human species has experienced, in its incessant renovation through the immensity of ages, the course which it has pursued, and the steps which it has advanced towards knowledge and happiness” (*Outlines*, p. 4). This perspective rests on a belief in the “indefinite” nature of human perfectibility, which is related to the same general laws that govern the cosmos. Indeed, Condorcet states at length that the aim of his work “will be to show, from reasoning and from acts, that no bounds have been fixed to the improvement of the human faculties; that the perfectibility of man is absolutely indefinite; that the progress of this perfectibility [...] has no other limit than the duration of the globe upon which nature placed us. The course of this progress may doubtless be more or less rapid, but it can never be retrograde; at least while the earth retains its situation in the system of the universe, and the laws of this system shall neither effect upon the globe a general overthrow, nor introduce such changes as would no longer permit the human race to preserve and exercise therein the same faculties, and find the same resources” (pp. 4–5; this theme will be examined in the Tenth Epoch, in particular on pp. 411–412, where the author explains the two meanings of the word “indefinite”; see also p. 287, where he touches on the origin of the doctrine of the “infinite perfectibility” as elaborated by Turgot, Price, and Priestley).

Within this theory of progress, the connection between *nature* and *history* is fundamental and represents a sort of lay version of that providentialism which had imbued the traditional Christian vision of history. In the *Esquisse*, however, the theological idea of an immanent totality is interwoven with Voltaire’s perspective of history as the exclusive, laboured product of human efforts. Trained in the study of science and the inventor of ‘social mathematics’, Condorcet asserts the legitimacy of prediction in the domain of history, as it was currently accepted and practised in the field of naturalistic investigation. At the beginning of his treatment of the future advancement of the human mind, he defines the question in clear and rigorously ‘scientific’ terms: “If man can predict, almost with certainty, those appearances of which he understands the laws; if, even when the laws are unknown to him, experience of the past enables him to foresee, with considerable probability, future appearances; why should we suppose it a chimerical undertaking to delineate, with

some degree of truth, the picture of the future destiny of mankind from the results of its history? The only foundation of faith in the natural sciences is the principle, that the general laws, known or unknown, which regulate the phenomena of the universe, are regular and constant; and why should this principle, applicable to the other operations of nature, be less true when applied to the development of the intellectual and moral faculties of man?" (p. 165).

The methodological assimilation of the "results of history" with the "experience of the past" in the study of nature – within a perspective embracing the past, the present, and the future – provides historiographical research with a justification and an aim that go far beyond the traditional 'history of errors' which was so widespread during the century of the *lumières*. The history of the human mind undoubtedly presents a picture of the "general errors, which have more or less contributed to retarding or to suspending the advance of reason, and sometimes even, just like political events, have been the cause of man's taking a retrograde course towards ignorance" (p. 16). Just like truths, errors are "the consequence of the activity of the human mind, and of the disproportion that always exists between what it actually knows, what it has the desire to know, and what it conceives there is a necessity of acquiring". Following the "general laws of the development of our faculties", each epoch has its own prejudices, according to whether it corresponds to the infancy or maturity of the mind, and these prejudices tend to be transmitted to the following epoch; in addition, there are the prejudices which are specifically produced by philosophers (which prevent truth from progressing), by the less cultivated classes (which "retard the propagation of truths already known"), and by some "esteemed and powerful professions". Hence, in the *Esquisse*, a prominent role is given to the "rise, triumph, and fall of prejudice" (pp. 17–18). This history of past errors, together with that of achievements, not only serves to warn us against making new mistakes, but also allows us to 'read' and design the city of the future. The study of the past opens up to man new heavens and new lands, where human hope reigns supreme. This confidence, which contrasted with the traumatic personal predicament of the author as he was writing the *Esquisse*, is supported by the awareness that he was living through a pivotal moment in the history of human society and by the ensuing need to grasp the meaning and the 'lesson' taught by that long historical sequence of events that led to the French Revolution, the collapse of religious "superstition" and "despotism", and to the rise of a new society. "Every thing tells us that we are approaching the era of the grand revolutions of the human race", observes Condorcet, concluding the Introduction, "What can better enlighten us to what we may expect, what can be a surer guide to us, amidst its commotions, than the picture of the revolutions that have preceded and prepared the way for it?" (p. 21).

Within the *tableau* of the advance of society and culture outlined by Condorcet, what is the role of the history of philosophy? Since it is situated within the broader context of a *histoire de l'esprit humain*, in which a strong ideological impetus is transfigured into a comprehensive philosophy of history, the treatment of the history of philosophy is subjected to a metamorphosis with respect to traditional modes: from an erudite, more or less 'critical' presentation of the lives and doctrines of the

philosophers, it is reduced to a synthesis offering a general perspective, in which individual figures and speculative trends serve to characterise the historical and cultural movement of an entire epoch and facilitate its interpretation. However, the history of philosophy preserves its individuality with respect to the history of political and social systems, the sciences, technologies, arts, and education. These internal divisions of the history of the human mind become particularly evident in the treatment of the previous two centuries (the Ninth Epoch), which were the richest in political and cultural progress; this subdivision is explicitly mentioned by Condorcet in the final pages concerning this epoch, which deserve special emphasis because they present the most advanced results of the new way of conceiving the ‘object’ of history – and of philosophy itself – elaborated during the century of the *lumières*. “Hitherto”, he observes after presenting the elements which serve to outline his *tableau historique*, “political history, as well as that of philosophy and the sciences, has been merely the history of a few men. That which forms in truth the human species, the mass of families, which subsist almost entirely upon their labour, has been forgotten; and even among that class of men who, devoted to public professions, act not for themselves but for society; whose occupation it is to instruct, to govern, to defend, and to comfort other men, the chiefs only have fixed the attention of historians” (p. 347).

Condorcet recognises the difficulty presented by this new form of historiography: whereas “for the history of individuals” we simply need to “collect the facts”, the “history of a mass of men” requires an extensive series of “observations” which need to be selected and interpreted, and which in most cases seem to be invalidated by imprecision and prejudice; hence this part of human history, which is the most important, corresponds to the smallest amount of reliable documentation. Nor is it helpful, in order to fully compensate for this lack, to possess knowledge of the legislative, political, and economic systems, or the most widespread prejudices, because – and here Condorcet reveals his remarkable historiographical acumen – there may be a big gap between these principles and the actual way in which they are applied and experienced in society. Thus he concludes: “To this part of the history of the human species, which is the most obscure, the most neglected, and for which facts offer us so few materials, it is that we should more particularly attend in this outline; and whether an account be rendered of a new discovery, an important theory, a new system of laws, or a political revolution, the problem to be determined will consist in ascertaining *what effects* ought to have arisen from the will of the most numerous portion of each society. *This is the true object of philosophy*; because all the intermediate effects of these same causes can be considered only as means of acting, at least upon this portion, which truly constitutes the *mass of the human race*” (pp. 349–350; italics ours; for a comparison with the distinction established by J.Ch. Adelung between “philosophy” and “philosophical spirit” – which is the effect produced by philosophy in the people, that is to say, liberation from prejudices – see below, Sect. 9.3.3.). The ability to positively influence the destiny of human society, therefore, represents the criterion by which the *philosophe* may appraise all theory, all discovery, and all political transformation. It is in this democratic perspective, which is the fruit of harmonious “justice” and “reason”, that historical

knowledge finds its most profound legitimation, because it makes it possible to establish precisely the degree of perfection attained by mankind, and consequently “to enjoy, with a well-grounded pleasure, the progress of their reason” (p. 350; as regards the role given to those individuals who possess “genius” within a democratic and egalitarian context cf. Dagen, pp. 648–650).

### 2.5.4 *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*

**2.5.4.1** Intended as an introductory outline, the *Esquisse* has a simple structure: the work is preceded by a general foreword (*Outlines*, pp. 1–22) and is subdivided into ten sections, corresponding to as many historical epochs, without any further subdivisions. The text has no notes by the author. At the beginning there is an anonymous ‘Preface’, dating from the first edition of the work, which has been attributed to Pierre-Claude-François Daunou and is an eloquent document showing the attitude of the *idéologues* toward the work of their departed master just after the fall of Robespierre’s regime. In particular, it is observed that Condorcet renounced his original plan of writing, as a sort of self-apology, “a summary of his principles, and of his conduct in public affairs”, while devoting the short time that was left to him writing a “work of general and permanent utility”, which followed in the wake of several other works, “in which the rights of men had previously been discussed and established” (pp. XI–XII).

**2.5.4.2** Within the structure of the *Esquisse*, periodization takes on decisive importance: far from being reduced to a chronological framework within which events are assembled, it indicates the very logic guiding the path of mankind towards its gradual but certain perfection. In the introductory pages, Condorcet presents a more general periodization that revolves around three great periods. The first and most distant one concerns the acquisition of “those first degrees of improvement, the last term of which is the use of an articulate language”, which is the only feature that, together with “a few more extensive moral ideas and a slight commencement of social order”, distinguishes man from animals that live together in societies (*Outlines*, p. 13). The second period proceeds from the origin of language to the moment when man “exercises arts [i.e. technologies], in which the rays of science begin to enlighten him, in which nations are united by commercial intercourse; in which, in fine, alphabetical writing is invented”. Here begins the third great period, which extends to the contemporary age, that is, to the “present state of mankind in the most enlightened countries of Europe”. But the perspective extends beyond the present time, since “there remains a third picture to form, — that of our hopes, or the progress reserved for future generations, which the constancy of the laws of nature seems to secure to mankind” (pp. 14–15).

In the course of the treatment, the three great periods outlined above are subdivided into nine “epochs”; and a tenth and final epoch, concerning future times, is added. The First Epoch (entitled ‘Men united into hordes’) coincides with

the first great period, while the second period is dealt with in the Second Epoch ('Pastoral state of mankind. Transition from that to the agricultural state') and the Third Epoch ('Progress of mankind from the agricultural state to the invention of alphabetical writing'). The third period embraces the following six epochs, which basically correspond to the development of Western civilisation, a development that is bracketed by two climaxes, the first represented by the Greek people, "whom fate had destined to be the benefactor and guide of all nations and all ages" and the second by the French people, the only people which "has since dared to entertain the hope of presiding in a revolution new in the destiny of mankind" (p. 76). These six epochs are distinguished from one another by criteria that are not of a historico-political, but a cultural nature, and it is precisely in this ambit that the analysis of the history of philosophy finds its own place. Indeed, the Fourth Epoch ('Progress of the human mind in Greece, till the division of the sciences about the age of Alexander') begins with the transmission of alphabetical writing and other knowledge from the East to Greece, and presents "the first dawn of philosophy" (up to Plato) and the "first advance of the sciences", together with the political and legislative principles and an exuberant development of the fine arts. The following epoch (the Fifth: 'Progress of the sciences, from their division to their decline') starts from Aristotle and, passing through the philosophical, scientific, and religious doctrines of the Hellenistic and Roman world, comes to the "triumph of Christianity", which "was the signal of the entire decline both of the sciences and of philosophy" and was facilitated by the scarcity of books in circulation and by the sense of authority prevalent among the scholars of the time (p. 143).

This marks the beginning of the Sixth Epoch ('Decline of learning, to its restoration about the period of the Crusades'). This was a "disastrous epoch", in which "we shall see the human mind rapidly descending from the height to which it had raised itself, while Ignorance marches in triumph, carrying with her, in one place, barbarian ferocity; in another, a more refined and accomplished cruelty; every where, corruption and perfidy" (p. 153). The context of this epoch is divided into two parts: the West, where, owing to the barbarian invasions, "the decline was more rapid and more absolute", and the East, "where the decline was more slow, and, for a long time, less universal, but where the day of reason has not yet dawned, that shall enlighten it, and enable it to break in pieces its chains" (p. 154). This context also includes "the religion of Mahomet" which, although it is "the most simple in its dogmas, the least absurd in its practices, above all others tolerant in its principles", seems nevertheless to condemn "to an eternal slavery, to an incurable stupidity, all that vast portion of the earth in which it has extended its empire; while we are about to see the genius of science and liberty blaze forth anew under superstitions more absurd, and in the midst of the most barbarous intolerance. China exhibits a similar phenomenon, though the effects of this stupefying poison have there been less fatal" (p. 176).

The transition to the Seventh Epoch ('From the first progress of the sciences about the period of their revival in the West, to the invention of the art of printing') is the work of those who started to stand up against intolerance, greed, and the corruption of the clergy. The persecutions carried out by the Inquisition "could not



prevent a spirit of freedom and enquiry from making a silent and furtive progress. Crushed in one country, in which it had the temerity to show itself, in which, more than once, intolerant hypocrisy kindled the most sanguinary wars, it started up, or spread secretly in another. It is seen at every interval, till the period, when, aided by the invention of the press, it gained sufficient power to rescue a portion of Europe from the yoke of the court of Rome" (pp. 178–179; on the following page, the author mentions the emperor Frederick II, "suspected of being what our priests of the eighteenth century have since denominated a *philosopher*"). Progress was made on a political level too: the English *Magna Charta* and similar documents are judged to be "the origin of those declarations of rights, regarded at present by every enlightened mind as the basis of liberty; and of which the ancients neither had nor could have an idea, because their institutions were sullied by domestic slavery" (pp. 186–187).

The Eighth Epoch ('From the invention of printing to the period when the sciences and philosophy threw off the yoke of authority') was inaugurated by three major events which had a profound effect on the development of the human mind. The first was the invention of printing, the liberating effects of which are lavishly praised by Condorcet, himself a child of the *lumières* and a first-rate political writer: typographical art meant liberation from ignorance, prejudice, "from every political and religious chain" (p. 204), and gave rise to that "public opinion" which constitutes a real "tribunal [. . .] independent of all human power, from the penetration of which it is difficult to conceal any thing, from whose verdict there is no escape" (p. 200). The other two events are the fall of Constantinople, and the geographical discoveries which "had extended for Europe the bounds of the universe" (here Condorcet contrasts the "heroes of navigation", inspired by "a noble curiosity", with the "kings and robbers who were to reap the profits of their labour": inspired by a "mean and cruel avarice" and by a "stupid and brutal fanaticism" they littered those "wretched countries" with millions of corpses: pp. 208–209).

This epoch also saw the first great rebellion against "the crimes of the priesthood" (p. 211). The Reformation would have delivered the whole of Western Europe from papal domination if some sovereigns had not set themselves against it in their thirst for territorial conquests and above all in their instinctive fear that their peoples, "after subjecting religious prejudices to the examination of reason, would soon extend their enquiries to prejudices of another sort; that, enlightened upon the usurpations of popes, they might wish at last to be equally enlightened upon those of princes" (p. 215). Condorcet does not fail to point out the flaws of the Reformation itself, since "the spirit which animated the reformers did not introduce a real freedom of sentiment", while "what the insolence of the ruling sect called by the name of toleration" was in fact a right restricted to the different Christian confessions: "a sort of freedom of thought, not for men, but for Christians" (pp. 221–222). However, it was precisely this fundamental intolerance that induced human reason to define natural rights more clearly and to examine the foundations of the power held by sovereigns; this gave rise to the doctrines that Althusius and other political theoreticians "boldly professed, and investigated thoroughly" (p. 224). Indeed, in this epoch, in opposition to the traditional dominance asserted by

authority, the progress of the sciences grew more rapid; and it was the sciences and philosophy which provided the decisive impetus for the new epoch, thanks to “three extraordinary personages”: Bacon, Galileo, and above all Descartes. The path to reason and freedom was already in sight. “The human mind was not yet free”, observes Condorcet concluding the eighth epoch, “but it knew that it was formed to be free” (pp. 245 and 248).

We finally come to the contemporary age (the Ninth: ‘From the time of Descartes, to the formation of the French Republic’, which took place on 21st September, 1792). This is the age in which reason finally broke the chains of prejudice, superstition, and despotism: “In which, free at length to pursue its course, it can no longer be stopped but by those obstacles, the occurrence of which is inevitable upon every new progress, as being the result of the conformation of the mind itself, or of the connection which nature has established between our means of discovering truth, and the obstacles she opposes to our efforts” (p. 251). Condorcet devotes the largest amount of space to this epoch (101 pages in the London edition of 1795) and provides a broad picture of the progress made by the human mind, which is traced back in its entirety to a philosophical root. Indeed, the advances made on the level of political theory (with the transition from an enlightened despotism to a full acknowledgement of the equality of nature and of rights for all men) and political economy (which precisely in this age developed as a science, “governed by the principles of philosophy and subjected to the rules of a rigid calculation”) are primarily produced by “the advancement of that branch of philosophy comprehended in the term metaphysics, taking the word in its most extensive signification”. Philosophy had been brought back within the “dominion of reason” by Descartes, who “perceived the propriety of deducing it from those simple and evident truths which are revealed to us by an investigation of the operations of the mind. But scarcely had he discovered this principle than his eager imagination led him to depart from it, and philosophy appeared for a time to have resumed its independence only to become the prey of new errors” (pp. 267–268). This movement of philosophical, political, juridical, and economic ideas, which were universally disseminated due to the practice of printing, translated into a “disposition of the public mind” which was totally opposed to political regimes, so “we shall perceive, without difficulty, that an important revolution was inevitable” (pp. 290–291). After the American Revolution, the French people were now “destined by the very nature of things, to give the first impulse to this revolution, expected by the friends of humanity with such eager impatience, such ardent hope”. The image Condorcet provides here of this awesome event was to become a classic: “The impolicy and unskillfulness of the French government hastened the event. It was guided by the hand of philosophy, and the popular force destroyed the obstacles that otherwise might have arrested its progress” (pp. 296–297).

As noted above, the tenth and final Epoch (‘Future progress of mankind’) projects us into the domain of the future prospects of humanity. The ‘scientific’ approach to this scenario merges here with a totally secularized eschatology and palingenesis. “Then will arrive the moment”, declares Condorcet with ardour, “in which the sun will observe in its course free nations only, acknowledging no other

master than their reason; in which tyrants and slaves, priests and their stupid or hypocritical instruments, will no longer exist but in history and upon the stage; in which our only concern will be to lament their past victims and dupes, and, by the recollection of their horrid enormities, to exercise a vigilant circumspection, that we may be able instantly to recognise and effectually to stifle by the force of reason, the seeds of superstition and tyranny, should they ever presume again to make their appearance upon the earth” (pp. 364–365). Hopes for the future centre upon three fundamental points: “the destruction of inequality between different nations; the progress of equality in one and the same nation; and lastly, the real improvement of man” (p. 353). These coordinates provide the context within which a number of achievements should be made in all fields: from free commerce to economic welfare and social security; from the abolition of “prejudices between sexes” and the ensuing “greater happiness of families” to the elimination of war and the establishment of a “brotherhood between nations”; from the progress of the sciences, the fine arts, and education to the creation of a universal language; in particular, the development of “social art” on mathematical and statistical bases will make it possible to resolve all contrast between the interest of the individual and the interest of the community (pp. 388–389).<sup>9</sup>

**2.5.4.3** Having traced the path followed by the *esprit humain*, let us look at those aspects which strictly concern the history of philosophy; our purpose is not to cut out and piece together elements which in reality serve to create the design of a history of the human mind, but to grasp the nature, within this context, of the presence and use of materials and positions belonging to an adjacent genre such as the history of philosophy. Ancient Eastern thought is viewed by Condorcet through a sociological lens typical of the repertoire of the *lumières*: the priestly castes had established a clear distinction between two doctrines; they reserved one for themselves, committing it to writings that were incomprehensible to the uninitiated, while the other was destined for the people. In their reflections, the ancient priests “invented, and introduced almost every where, the metaphysical system of a great, immense and eternal all, of which the whole of the beings that

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<sup>9</sup>In addition to that presented in the *Esquisse*, let us mention another form of periodization – contained in a fragment later published by Alengry – pertaining to the ancient philosophers, which is of considerable interest from the point of view of the history of philosophy. In this fragment, Condorcet distinguishes between four epochs by referring to the “fashion in which men have understood the general economy of nature”. “In the first epoch, since they considered beings to be active and somehow urged by a power similar to their own, men gave a soul to all great objects and all great phenomena of matter, that is, they attributed ideas, wishes, and intentions to them. This was the cosmology of all savage nations [. . .]. In the second epoch, philosophers considered nature to be somehow composed of brute matter and by an active principle modifying this matter”. Condorcet hints at the advancement represented by Democritus’ materialistic mechanism, then moves on to the “happier conception” elaborated by Pythagoras, who, having studied irrational numbers and having observed the regularity of natural phenomena, notably of the motion of stars, “inferred that there certainly existed a calculable law regulating those motions. This idea was so sublime and superior in the century of Pythagoras, that its intelligibility was lost after his death” (Alengry, *Condorcet*, pp. 782–783).

existed were only parts, of which the various changes observable in the universe were but modifications". But that which corresponded to "metaphysical opinions" in the language and writings of the priests became "to the eyes of the people the most extravagant system of mythology", and this is how religions originated (*Outlines*, pp. 71–72). However, even the knowledge possessed by the clergy finally deteriorated; the traditional theme of very ancient knowledge and its subsequent decay seems to come back to life here in a lay version. Indeed, the priests, "whose interest it was to deceive, soon felt a dislike to the pursuit of truth. Content with the docility of the people, they conceived there was no need of further means to secure its continuance. By degrees they forgot a part of the truths concealed under their allegories". So the progress of the sciences came to a halt and a part of the knowledge previously acquired was finally lost to the new generations: "The human mind, a prey to ignorance and prejudice, was condemned, in those vast empires, to a shameful stagnation, of which the uniform and unvaried continuance has so long been a dishonour to Asia" (pp. 73–74).

Rather than resulting from political freedom, the rapid development of the human mind among the Greeks was attributed to "fortunate circumstance", as a consequence of which knowledge was not the exclusive patrimony of the priestly caste. In Greece, "all men possessed an equal right to the knowledge of truth. All might engage in the pursuit of it, and communicate it to all, not in scraps or parcels, but in its whole extent". But, as in Condillac, this idealisation of the Greek people as the first upholders of free-thinking, democratically open to everyone, is followed by the denunciation of the fundamental fault of the Greek philosophers: the plans they conceived were too ambitious, "they were desirous of penetrating both the nature of man, and that of the Gods; the origin of the world, as well as of the human race. They endeavoured to reduce all nature to one principle only, and the phenomena of the universe to one law. They attempted to include, in a single rule of conduct, all the duties of morality, and the secret of true happiness. Thus, instead of discovering truths, they forged systems; they neglected the observation of facts, to pursue the chimeras of their imagination [...]" (pp. 79–81). But this generally negative judgement becomes less unitary and straightforward when Condorcet mentions the individual philosophers: compared with Condillac, he possessed a more progressive vision of the human mind, which tended to exclude total, anti-historical condemnations. Democritus and Pythagoras are therefore appreciated as forerunners, respectively, of Descartes' mechanistic system and Newton's scientific thought, according to which all phenomena depend on "general laws capable of being ascertained by calculation". The distance from Condillac's negative judgement appears clearer here, and indeed Condorcet acclaims the Pythagorean school as a breeding ground of "legislators, and intrepid defenders of the rights of mankind", who, in his view, had to succumb to "the power of the tyrants" (pp. 82–83; the link with Freemasonry is evident; see also, on p. 181, a reference to the "secret societies" which had arisen in the Middle Ages "to perpetuate, to spread silently and without risk, among some disciples and adepts, a few simple truths which might operate as a preservative against prevailing prejudices").

Following the tradition of the *philosophes*, the figure of Socrates stands out among the Greek thinkers as a symbol of human reason. His call to bring philosophy down to earth does not mean that he maintained “the puerile and false idea of reducing the human mind to the study of morality alone”; his intention was only to “induce men to confine themselves to objects which nature has placed within their reach” and to teach them to make use of reason (pp. 85–86). His death sentence, imputed to have been accomplished by the machinations of the priests, is regarded as “the first crime that the war between philosophy and superstition conceived and brought forth”, and it is emblematic of the battle against the throne and the altar that characterises the course of human history (“The burning of the Pythagorean school had already signalized the war, not less ancient, not less eager, of the oppressors of mankind against philosophy. The one and the other will continue to be waged as long as there shall exist priests or kings upon the earth”: p. 86). As a pupil of Socrates and a proponent of mathematical studies, Plato receives much more indulgence than was commonly paid to him by the *philosophes*. The apparent contradiction between his scientific and literary merits and his “mild and pure morality” on the one hand, and, on the other, the “visionary ideas that too often form the basis of his work”, is ascribed to the fact that he limited himself to quoting systems elaborated by others and accepted Socratic doubt. Plato’s dialogues are presented as “a school of Pyrrhonism”; they bring together “the adventurous imagination of a learned man, amusing himself with combining and dissecting splendid hypotheses, and the reserve of a philosopher, giving scope to his fancy, but without suffering himself to be hurried away by it; because his reason, armed with a salutary doubt, had the wherewithal to defend itself against illusions, however seducing might be their charms” (pp. 89–91).

While recognising the value of Socratic and Platonic doubt, Condorcet distances himself from the scepticism of the Middle Academy, which goes against the confidence he has in scientific knowledge. Doubt is valid against metaphysical claims, but becomes “weakness or insanity” when it is extended to “demonstrated truths” and “principles of morality”: this is the excess incurred by the “sophists” who, in the Academy, succeeded Plato’s early disciples. Condorcet takes care to explain, however, that the Academic school did not drift totally towards the “sceptical mania”, and that “the doctrine of an eternal idea, just, comely, honest, independent of the interests and conventions of men, and even of their existence, an idea that, imprinted on the soul, becomes the principle of duty and the law of our actions, this doctrine, derived from the Dialogues of Plato, was still inculcated in his school, and constituted the basis of moral instruction” (pp. 118–119). The negative image of an “enthusiastic” Plato, which represented the equivalent, from an Enlightenment perspective, of the traditional image of the “divine Plato”, thus gives way to Plato as a model of rationality and high morality, a historical reflection (and perhaps even a prefiguration) of the ideals in which Condorcet believed and for which he had fought.

Another typical feature of Condorcet’s interpretation of Greek thought is his praise of the philosophical schools: originating to “perpetuate” the theories and method of their leader, “these schools possessed the advantage of uniting together by

the ties of a liberal fraternity, men intent upon penetrating the secrets of nature". The negative aspects (submission to the master, a sectarian spirit, permanent conflicts between the different schools) are considered to be outweighed by the positive ones: indeed, in Greece, the philosophical schools were "the only powerful means of cherishing a taste for philosophy in that country, and of disseminating new truths"; moreover, "the continual sight of such disputes, the interest that was taken in these combats of opinion, awakened and attached to the study of philosophy a multitude of men, whom the mere love of truth could neither have allured from their business and pleasure, nor even have roused from their indolence"; free to increase in number and not linked to political institutions, the schools protected the Greeks from "that abasement of reason, which, with the majority of other nations, was an insurmountable obstacle to the advancement of the human mind" (pp. 91–93). The ancient *topos* in which, for various reasons, the schools (the 'sects') were a negative factor for philosophy is thus reversed.

The epistemological bases underlying the position of the author of the *Esquisse* emerge again in his presentation of Aristotle. Since he had not known "the art of analysing ideas" for reconstructing the workings of the human mind, the Stagirite elaborated a metaphysics which, just like the others, "consisted of a vague doctrine, founded sometimes upon an abuse of words, and sometimes upon mere hypotheses". As for his well-known principle that our knowledge derives entirely from sensation, "it was rather the intuitive perception of a man of genius, than the result of a series of observations accurately analysed, and systematically combined, in order to derive from them some general truth. Accordingly, this germ, cast in an ungrateful soil, produced no useful fruit till after a period of more than twenty centuries" (pp. 119–120). This reasoning seems to be modelled on that formulated by Condillac, but Condorcet immediately distances himself in his assessment of Aristotelian logic: after mentioning the combinations of propositions in argumentative theory (since "the art of right reasoning is subjected in some measure to technical rules") he observes that "this ingenious idea has hitherto remained useless; but perhaps it may one day become the leading step toward a perfection which the art of reasoning and discussion seems still to expect" (p. 121). In the eyes of a philosopher and mathematician like Condorcet, Aristotle's greatest merit lies in having been the first to understand that "the method observed in philosophy" (which he had also applied to poetry and rhetoric) must be extended "to every thing attainable by human intelligence; since, as this intelligence exercised in all cases the same faculties, it ought invariably to be governed by the same laws" (p. 106).

The survey of Greek philosophy is completed by the Stoics and the Epicureans, two schools which, due to their broad influence, hastened the decline of superstition in Greece, even though it was to be replaced by "a superstition more gloomy, more dangerous, more inimical to knowledge", namely the Christian religion (p. 122). Condorcet points out that, although they founded their morals on opposing principles, these two schools of thought led to the same practical outcomes. This gives him the opportunity to assert that "the moral precepts", which are so similar in all religions and philosophies, rest on a foundation and a truth that transcends the doctrines of the different religions and philosophies as they manifested themselves

historically: "it is in the moral constitution of man that we must seek the basis of his duties, the origin of his ideas of justice and virtue: a truth which the sect of Epicureans approached more nearly than any other; and no circumstance perhaps so much contributed to draw upon it the enmity of all classes of hypocrites with whom morality was no commercial object of which they ambitiously contended for the monopoly" (p. 126).

The development of thought that subsequently followed is characterized in a negative way. In Greece, the "splendour" of philosophy vanished together with freedom, while the particular sciences, which had previously been branches separated from a common trunk, "found, in the capital of Egypt, an asylum, which, by the despots who governed it, would probably have been refused to philosophy"; the sciences could therefore develop freely, because "the tyranny of the Romans, so regardless of the progress of knowledge, did not extend to Egypt till a late period" (p. 108). While the territorial and linguistic unification which took place under the Roman empire brought about, as its "natural effect", the gradual reduction of the differences between the various schools and the rise of eclecticism (p. 135), Plato's dialogues became "the arsenal" of weapons from which the "two opposite parties" could draw: that of the philosophers (who tried to "purify" the ancient Greek religion, since, among the learned, the beneficial influence of the philosophical schools had destroyed popular beliefs) and that of the "sacerdotal religions", which became the refuge of the "children of misfortune" and "men of a weak but sanguine imagination" who "felt the necessity of relieving, by metaphysical subtleties, their gross mythology" (pp. 138–140). It was within this latter domain that the Christian religion came into being, for which Condorcet harbours a definite hostility, inducing him to exalt Julian the Apostate's attempt "to free the empire from this plague". Echoing the anti-Christian polemic which had violently erupted during the years of the Revolution, he observes that "contempt for human sciences was one of the first features of Christianity. It had to avenge itself of the outrages of philosophy; it feared that spirit of investigation and doubt, that confidence of man in his own reason, the pest alike of all religious creeds"; and it was Christianity which brought about "the entire decline" of both the sciences and philosophy (pp. 142–143).

Although a grim picture is painted of the "darkness" of the Middle Ages, the judgements on the thought produced during those centuries are not as negative as might be expected. Among the Arabs, "the sciences were free, and to that freedom they owed their being able to revive some sparks of the Grecian genius", but because of political despotism and religious fanaticism "this light shone for a few moments only to give place to a thicker darkness; and these labours of the Arabs would have been lost to the human race, if they had not served to prepare that more durable restoration, of which the West will presently exhibit to us the picture" (p. 174). But it is above all in the presentation of the thought of the Scholastics that Condorcet's progressive and 'historicist' attitude prevails over the more traditionally critical stance, thus making the disquisitions of the medieval Peripatetics the starting point in a process which was to lead to Locke and Condillac: "This scholastic discipline did not lead to the discovery of truth; it did not even serve for the discussion and accurate valuation of its proofs, but it whetted the minds of men; and the taste

for subtle distinctions, the necessity of continually dividing and subdividing ideas, of seizing their nicest shades, and expressing them in new words, the apparatus which was in the first instance employed to embarrass one's enemy in a dispute, or the escape from his toils, was the original source of that philosophical analysis to which we have since been so highly indebted for our intellectual progress". We are particularly indebted to the Scholastics for their definition of the supreme Being, the distinctions between the first cause and the universe and between matter and spirit, a more profound study of terms like 'freedom' and 'creation', and an analysis of the workings of the human mind. Yet, at the same time, this method had the effect of retarding "in the schools the advancement of natural sciences" (pp. 189–190; for a comparison with the similar considerations formulated by the German Tiedemann, see below, Sect. 9.5.4.3).

This ambivalence is even more evident in Condorcet's presentation of the antithetical use of Aristotle at the beginning of the modern age: "While in the schools the philosophy of Aristotle, imperfectly understood, had been employed to improve the subtleties of theology, and render ingenious what would naturally have borne the features of absurdity, some men of learning established upon his true doctrine a system destructive of every religious idea, in which the human soul was considered only as a faculty that vanished with life, and in which no other providence, no other ruler of the world was admitted than the necessary laws of nature". These upholders of "free-thinking" (Condorcet is clearly referring to Pomponazzi and the Paduan Aristotelians) were opposed by the Platonists, "whose sentiments", observes Condorcet with satisfaction, "resembling what has since been called by the name of deism, were more terrifying still to sacerdotal orthodoxy" (p. 218). However, the persecutions to which these audacious thinkers were subjected meant that the use of reason had to be covered "with a veil, which, hiding it from the observation of tyrants might still permit it to be seen by the eye of philosophy". This is the genesis of what is known today as *libertinisme érudit*. But while recognising its historical function, the democratic and egalitarian Condorcet does not share this intellectual attitude, which he relates to "religious Machiavellism" and to the mistaken idea "that men of enlightened minds have a right to deceive the people, provided they impose only useful truths, and to retain them in chains from which they have themselves contrived to escape". In addition to politics, these principles also corrupted philosophy and morals, arousing Condorcet's fierce reaction: "If the natural equality of mankind, the principal basis of its rights, be the foundation of all genuine morality, what could it hope from a philosophy, of which an open contempt of this equality and these rights is a distinguishing feature? This same philosophy has contributed no doubt to the advancement of reason, whose reign it silently prepared; but so long as it was the only philosophy, its sole effect was to substitute hypocrisy in the place of fanaticism, and to corrupt, at the same time that it raised above prejudices, those who presided in the destiny of state" (pp. 219–220).

Let us now move on to the three thinkers who turned the battle against authority of the eighth epoch in the favour of reason. Bacon, the first, "revealed the true method of studying nature" and taught man to free himself of prejudices; but since his methods remained on a merely theoretical plane and lacked application, they



“produced no change in the march of sciences”. Galileo, on the other hand, enriched the sciences “with the most useful and brilliant discoveries”, which were attained “in a way sure and productive”; however, “confining himself exclusively to the mathematical and physical sciences, he was unable to communicate to the general mind that impulsion which it seemed to want” (pp. 245–246). This was achieved by Descartes, whom Condorcet appreciates for two reasons: first for his unification of all the fields of investigation under one method, as Aristotle had already done (“He wished to extend his method to every object of human intelligence; God, man, the universe, were in turn the subject of his meditation”), and second for the positive influence that his audacious and imaginative physical theories exerted on the development of the human mind. Indeed, taking up a topic already present in Voltaire and Condillac, Condorcet observes that it was precisely the audacity of the mistakes made by Descartes which helped the progress of humanity: “He gave activity to minds which the circumspection of his rivals could not awake from their lethargy. He called upon men to throw off the yoke of authority, to acknowledge no influence but what reason should avow: and he was obeyed, because he subjected by his daring, and fascinated by his enthusiasm” (pp. 247–248; for the theme of the unity of knowledge, cf. Dagen, pp. 617–618; for a critical comparison between Descartes and Pascal, see also *Éloge de Pascal*, published by Condorcet in 1776 which is of particular interest from a historiographical point of view).

The picture of contemporary philosophy centres around the figure of Locke, who, by his method of analysing ideas, indicated the only possible path that could be followed to avoid going astray “in a chaos of notions incomplete, incoherent, and undetermined, disorderly because suggested by accident, and afterwards entertained without reflecting on their nature”. He identified “the most fruitful source of error” in the use of words which do not correspond to definite ideas, and was “the first who ventured to prescribe the limits of the human understanding, or rather to determine the nature of the truths it can ascertain and the objects it can embrace” (pp. 268–269). Subsequently adopted by all philosophers, this method was applied to morals, politics, and economics, becoming a sort of “general instrument” capable of improving the method followed by the physical sciences themselves and also useful for analysing historical facts and giving “laws to taste”: the unification of knowledge on the basis of a single universally valid method, which had been attempted by Aristotle and then by Descartes, now became feasible. Condorcet has an extremely clear perception of the progress brought about by Locke’s philosophy, declaring that it erected “an everlasting barrier between the human race and the old mistakes of its infancy”, thus preventing the appearance of new prejudices (pp. 270–271). Philosophy has therefore moved irrevocably forward and there can be no going back, just as, on a political and social level, there can be no going back from the radical changes wrought by the Revolution.

The philosophical survey of the last century is completed by Leibniz, “a man of a vast and profound genius”, “a bold and ardent mind”, entirely intent on resolving the great metaphysical problems, but whose philosophical system slowed down the progress of German philosophy. We then come to the English followers of the Leibnizian doctrine of optimism, who “frequently fell into absurd and ridiculous

reasonings” (Condorcet is probably referring to writers like Shaftesbury and Pope). Finally, he mentions the Scottish school, which tried to base moral action on a “new faculty, distinct from those of sensation and reason, tho’ at the same time combining itself with them; of the existence of which they could advance no other proof, than that it was impossible to form a consistent theory without it” (pp. 273–274). However, at this juncture what needs to be highlighted is the subsequent picture, which is devoted not to individual personalities or schools, but to the effects of doctrines elaborated in the philosophical sphere on public opinion and, more generally, on the whole of society. What Condorcet outlines here is a sort of history of the circulation and influence of ideas, in accordance with the theoretical claims presented above. “Hitherto”, he observes, fully aware of this change of perspective, “we have exhibited the state of philosophy only among men by whom it has in a manner been studied, investigated, and perfected. It remains to mark its influence on the general opinion, and to show, that, while it arrived at the certain and infallible means of discovering and recognising truth, reason at the same time detected the delusions into which it had so often been led by a respect for authority or a misguided imagination, and undermined those prejudices in the mass of individuals which had so long been the scourge, at once corrupting and inflicting calamity upon the human species” (p. 274).

This history of the dissemination of ideas is, in practice, the history of the movement of the *lumières*, whose guiding principles Condorcet passionately describes. The acknowledgement of the right to submit all opinion to reason has brought about the disappearance – from society as well as from philosophy – of both the prejudice concerning the superiority of the ancients and “the debasement of reason to the shrine of supernatural faith”. So it happened that “a class of men speedily made their appearance in Europe, whose object was less to discover and investigate truth, than to disseminate it; who, pursuing prejudice through all the haunts and asylums in which the clergy, the schools, governments, and privileged corporations had placed and protected it, made their glory rather to eradicate popular errors, than add to the stores of human knowledge”. This, Condorcet observes, contributed indirectly, in a way which is neither less difficult nor less useful, to the general progress of humanity. He then mentions the masters of the English and French Enlightenment: Collins and Bolingbroke, Bayle, Fontenelle, Voltaire, and Montesquieu, who, with their followers, all “fought on the side of truth with all the weapons that learning, wit and genius were able to furnish”. There follows a detailed and lively description of the tactics and the wiles used by the *philosophes* in their daily battle “against the crimes both of fanatics and tyrants”, in the name of the supreme principles of “reason, toleration, and humanity” (pp. 275–278). Thanks to the definitive progress brought about by Locke, the historical course of philosophy, taken in a strictly speculative sense, can therefore be considered to be complete, and a new phase opens, characterised by a new and fruitful relationship between philosophy and society. Before advancing towards the indefinite perfecting of the sciences and the intellectual and moral faculties of man, it is now necessary to complete the dissemination and application of the “new philosophy”, which presents itself as a mediator between the major theoretical and epistemological principles and the great

mass of humanity. Condorcet – the former secretary of the *Académie des sciences* and the skilful political journalist, last of the *philosophes* and first of the *idéologues* – fully identifies with this grand and exciting project.

**2.5.4.4** In the introduction to the *Esquisse*, Condorcet takes care to specify the different methods by which he intends to examine the three great periods into which the history of human progress is divided. As for the first period, which we know only thanks to the accounts of travellers to the “least civilized nations”, a reconstruction of the way in which man attained the use of language is possible by formulating conjectures and by an “investigation of the development of our faculties” on the basis of a parallel between the history of the individual and the history of humanity. As concerns the second period, the documentation available is more extensive and must be selected and assembled in a sort of model of historical development (“Here the picture begins to take its colouring in great measure from the series of facts transmitted to us by history: but it is necessary to select these facts from that of different nations, and at the same time compare and combine them, to form the supposed history of a single people, and delineate its progress”). The third great period shows us instead “an uninterrupted series of facts and observations”, so that “philosophy [the ‘reasoned’ history of the human mind] has no longer any thing to guess, has no more supposititious combinations to form; all it has to do is to collect and arrange facts, and exhibit the useful truths which arise from them as a whole, and from the different bearings of their several parts” (*Outlines*, pp. 13–15).

As for the criterion according to which he will examine the nine epochs (as well as the tenth, the epoch of the future), Condorcet declares that he will confine himself to the “principal features that characterise each” and provide only a general survey, without going into detail: “I shall indicate the objects, of the results of which the work itself will present the developments and the proofs” (p. 22). This plan also includes references to the history of philosophy, without any bio-bibliographical information and, for Greek thought, the usual framework of the schools, although essentialized in a ‘philosophical’ sense. As for the planned *Tableau*, of which the *Esquisse* was intended to be a mere introduction, Condorcet warns that, in outlining these schools of thought, he will concern himself with “principles” rather than with “systems”. In accordance with his theoretical and ideological premises, the new method he intends to adopt is summarised as follows: “We shall not attempt, as has frequently been done, to exhibit a precise view of the absurd doctrines which a language become almost unintelligible conceals from us; but shall endeavour to show by what general errors they were seduced into those deceitful paths, and to find the origin of these in the natural course of the human mind” (pp. 93–94).

**2.5.5** An extraordinary vehicle for political and social ideals, for cultural and educational projects, for theories destined to become commonplace in a large part of nineteenth-century historiography, as well as in the general knowledge of the educated classes and progressive circles, the *Esquisse* was welcomed with heartfelt admiration by a society which had just been released from the grip of the Terror, one of the victims of which had been Condorcet himself. This is reflected in a review published in the inaugural tome of the *Magazin encyclopédique*, where

the image of the new wise man is superimposed onto the traditional figure of the Greek philosopher, seen as a master of wisdom: “It is a great and wonderful spectacle, declared an ancient philosopher, a spectacle worthy of the divinity, that of a wise man who fights hand-to-hand with misfortune. Even more amazing is the sight of a wise man who – after 30 years of vigils and meditations devoted to the progress of the sciences and the happiness of the human species – is banished, roams underground in the dark or through solitary woods, leaves behind his unfruitful efforts, his persecutors, and his suffering; and, with no books, no friends, no help, only rich in thoughts and memories, erects with steady and brave hand a lasting monument to the glory of the human mind”. Before providing a detailed summary of the work, the reviewer makes a significant comparison with the *Discours préliminaire* by D’Alembert, who, “in the magnificent vestibule he had built before the temple of the sciences, had already displayed the scale and subdivision of human knowledge. Drawing a no less imposing, no less majestic picture of it was the task of his friend and successor” (ME, I, 1795, I, pp. 86–87). The first tome of this review also contains the decree promulgated by the Convention on 13th Germinal (2nd April) – on the basis of the report elaborated by Daunou on behalf of the Committee of Public Instruction – which decreed the purchase of 3,000 copies of the *Esquisse* to be distributed to the members of the Convention and all over the territory of the Republic, “in the most useful way for education” (p. 136). Indeed, the *Esquisse* immediately became a sort of philosophical and political manifesto of the *idéologues*, a symbol of the ideal continuity with the previous generation of the Encyclopaedists, so much so that Destutt de Tracy was to define Condorcet as “the greatest philosopher of these recent times”, even greater than Montesquieu (Picavet, p. 378).

In the course of the nineteenth century, Condorcet’s works and ideas profoundly influenced rationalistic and positivistic trends: Saint-Simon, for example, planned a work on the “science of man” which should have also contained a “sketch for a history of the progress of the human mind, from its beginnings up to the present”, while Comte (who defined Condorcet “my true spiritual father”) included the *Esquisse*, beside Bossuet’s *Discours sur l’histoire universelle*, among the 24 works which should have made up an ideal “library of the proletarian” (Rigotti, *L’umana perfezione*, pp. 63–65). Among the followers of Comte, Condorcet became a mythical figure, to the point that, from 1888 onwards, every year in April, a festival called *Fête de Condorcet* took place in Bourg-la-Reine.

Vigorous criticism and polemic, which in some cases involved Condorcet himself, came instead from the French Romantics (Lamartine, Sainte-Beuve, La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt), who were enemies of Enlightenment rationalism and levelling egalitarianism. As for Cousin, he recognised the “sense of humanity which animates and colours every page [of the *Esquisse*]” and induces us to “judge indulgently the declamations fashionable at the time” as well as “the total absence of criticism and erudition”. However, from a pedagogical point of view, it is judged to be “worthless food” for the young, because of its brief, superficial, and oversimplified character; as a result, “a fifteen-year-old boy can learn this little book by heart, repeat it from top to bottom, and believe that he knows something

about humanity and the world”; on the contrary, the young must be educated with much more profound and difficult works, and it is “only thanks to a virile practice of thought that French youth can be made capable of attaining the heights of the nineteenth century”. This critical judgement also contains an interesting comparison with Herder and, subsequently, a reference to Vico (“In any case, all that which is good and most praised in the *Esquisse* is present in Herder, namely, the sense of humanity, the idea of perpetual progress, and the fervent love for *civilisation*, which in Herder is pushed to enthusiasm; in Vico, enthusiasm does not lie in the form but in the foundation”: Cousin, pp. 299–300). Cousin thus departs from the view of Degérando, who had cited the *Esquisse* among the “auxiliary works” on the historiography of philosophy strictly speaking, which deal with the “history of human nature” and the “history of the human mind”. Condorcet’s work, observes Degérando, is a simple sketch, but is nevertheless “rich in profound views, it has greatness, when it is taken in its entirety, and shows skill in drawing comparisons”; it is perhaps “its very form that provides it with a sort of particular usefulness, [just] as the original drawings sketched in pencil by the great masters are particularly useful for instructing painters; it stimulates and provokes reflection, helps us to grasp with greater immediacy the main features, the predominant circumstances, and the action of the different causes which favoured or slowed down the progress [of the human mind]” (Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, pp. 174–175). Indeed, it is precisely its nature as an *esquisse* which enables the author to make original and provocative suggestions in the domain of the traditional repertoire of the historiography of philosophy.

**2.5.6** On Condorcet’s life and works: A. Diannyère, *Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Condorcet* (Paris, an IV<sup>e</sup>); J. Lalande, ‘Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Condorcet’, *Mercure de France*, t. XX, n. 21 (20th January, 1796), pp. 141–162; MSSLC, 1799, II/1, pp. 104–108; H. Delsaux, *Condorcet journaliste* (Paris, 1931); A. Cento, ‘Dei manoscritti del *Tableau* di Condorcet’, *Rendiconti dell’Ist. Lombardo di scienze e lettere*, Cl. di lett., sc. mor. e stor., vol. LXXXVIII (1955), pp. 311–324; Cioranescu, pp. 574–580; *Correspondance inédite de Condorcet et Mme Suard, M. Suard et Garat, 1771–1791*, ed. E. Badinter (Paris, 1989).

On Condorcet’s thought, and his historiographical view in particular: Cousin, pp. 298–300; Franck, I, pp. 552–557; H. Taine, *Les origines de la France contemporaine. L’Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1885<sup>14</sup>), p. 264; Picavet, pp. 101–116; F. Alengry, *Condorcet, guide de la Révolution française, théoricien du droit constitutionnel et précurseur de la science sociale* (Paris, 1904); A. Cento, *Condorcet e l’idea di progresso* (Florence, 1956); G.-G. Granger, *La mathématique sociale du Marquis de Condorcet* (Paris, 1956); Simone, pp. 436–439; M. Ghio, *L’idea di progresso nell’illuminismo francese e tedesco* (Turin, 1962), pp. 35–64; F.E. Manuel, *The Prophets of Paris* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962); Garin, *La storia “critica”*, pp. 247 and 274; R. Reichardt, *Reform und Revolution bei Condorcet: ein Beitrag zur späten Aufklärung in Frankreich* (Bonn, 1973); S. Moravia, *Il pensiero degli idéologues. Scienza e filosofia in Francia (1780–1815)* (Florence, 1974), pp. 675–715 (‘Condorcet e la “mathématique sociale”’); K.M. Baker, *Condorcet from Natural Philosophy to Social Mathematics* (Chicago and London, 1975); Dagen,

pp. 613–663; C. Scarcella, *Condorcet. Dottrine politiche e sociali* (Lecce, 1980); C. Kintzler, *Condorcet: l'instruction publique et la naissance du citoyen* (Paris, 1984); M. Crampe-Casnabet, *Condorcet, lecteur des Lumières* (Paris, 1985); E. Badinter, R. Badinter, *Condorcet (1743–1794): un intellectuel en politique* (Paris, 1988); *Condorcet: mathématicien, économiste, philosophe, homme politique*, P. Crépel and Ch. Gilain eds. (Paris, 1989); *Condorcet: homme des Lumières et de la Révolution*, A.-M. Chouillet and P. Crépel eds. (Fontenay Saint-Cloud, 1997); M. Arning, *Die Idee des Fortschritts. Der sozialphilosophische Entwurf des Marquis de Condorcet als alternative Synthesis. Vorstellung zum Konzept der politischen Tugend* (Frankfurt a.M., 1998); E. Rothschild, *Economic sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001); J.-N. Rieucan, 'Les origines de la philosophie probabiliste de Condorcet: une tentative d'interprétation', *SVEC* 2003/12, pp. 239–276; Lotterie, *Progrès et perfectibilité*, pp. 67–68, 80–89, and 91–106; J.-P. Schandeler, 'Condorcet et l'invention de la perfectibilité indéfinie', in *L'Homme perfectible*, ed. B. Binoche (Seyssel, 2004), pp. 221–251; J. Rohbeck, in Ueberweg, II/2, pp. 854–864; *Nouvelles lectures du Tableau historique de Condorcet*, ed. B. Binoche (Québec, 2010).

On the reception of his works: ME, I (1795), I, pp. 86–108 and 136; GLN, LV (15th July, 1796), pp. 36–53; ELR, 1798 (year VII of the Republic), XXVIII, pp. 55–62; Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, pp. 174–175; 298–339; A. Cento, 'Un riassunto ignorato dell'*Esquisse* di Condorcet: il proemio dell' "Antologia"', *Riv. di letterature moderne e comparate*, IV (1958), pp. 160–166; F. Rigotti, *L'umana perfezione. Saggio sulla circolazione e diffusione dell'idea di progresso nell'Italia del primo Ottocento* (Naples, 1980), pp. 17–37 and 51–69; J.-P. Schandeler, *Les interprétations de Condorcet. Symboles et concepts (1794–1894)* (Oxford, 2000).

# Chapter 3

## Religious Apologetics and Historiographical Practice

Gregorio Piaia

### Introduction

#### (a) *The apologetic use of the history of philosophy*

Following the analysis presented in the previous chapter, further aspects of French historiography in the second half of the eighteenth century will now be explored. In parallel and in opposition to works that were influenced by the *esprit philosophique* to a greater or lesser degree, a historiographical trend of apologetic religious works developed which sought to contest the diffusion of ‘philosophism’, deism, and atheism. It is worth pausing, therefore, to examine separately those general histories of philosophy which had an apologetic, polemical intent, while bearing in mind that the historiographical landscape did not merely consist of a schematic opposition between the party of staunch *philosophes* and the party of ardent *dévots*. Indeed, intermediate positions frequently appeared which cannot be rigidly classified on either of the two sides. Batteux, for example, was dealt with in the previous chapter because his philosophical outlook is close to that of Condillac, but this does not mean that his historiographical work was lacking in apologetic concerns. In effect, putting aside this ideological contrast, it is often possible to see a common speculative and epistemological basis to the different works. In this way, Vernière’s remark on current attitudes to Spinozism can also be applied to the historiography of philosophy: to envisage the existence of “sects with well-defined characteristics and modes of thought which are irredeemably different from one another means failing to recognize the deep intellectual unity of the period, and

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replace the fluctuating life of the soul which the history of ideas must express with an academic schematism” (Vernière, p. 446).

Three writers will be examined in this chapter. The first, Richard Gérard de Bury, was a staunch defender of the *ancien régime*, and his rather modest work can be seen as an example of populist didactic literature. Of much greater intellectual calibre was the figure of *Abbé* Pluquet, a representative of the apologists “who embody a more moderate tendency and do not yield to the temptation of blind hatred and gross simplifications” (Rétat, p. 339). The resolute Jansenist, *Abbé* Pelvert, on the other hand, can be distinguished by the rigorous structure of his approach, which he develops within an established framework. Yet in addition to these ‘histories’, chosen for their general character as well as for their markedly apologetic orientation, it is worth mentioning several other works which use sources or approach the history of philosophy with the aim of affirming Christian principles.

To give an example, an outline of a “history of philosophy, its advances, and its improper uses” is sketched out in the ‘Préface’ to a work written by the journalist (and former Jesuit) Louis-Abel Bonafous, known as the *Abbé* de Fontenay, who was a defender of the monarchy during the Revolution: *Antilogies et fragments philosophiques, ou Collection méthodique des morceaux les plus curieux et les plus intéressants sur la religion, la philosophie, les sciences et les arts, extraits des écrits de la philosophie moderne* (Amsterdam and Paris: Vincent, 1774–1775), I, pp. v–xxii (this work, consisting of 4 duodecimo volumes, was republished in 1777 under the title *Esprit des livres défendus*). According to the *Abbé* de Fontenay, philosophy originated in Egypt and India, and the ages of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Archimedes represent the “most sublime advance made by the human mind”. After its rebirth during the reign of Francis I and then Louis XIV, philosophy soon fell into decline, being perceived as “opposed to religion, the fatherland, and society” (I, p. xiv).

There is a review of about a 100 pages concerning the history of scepticism, with a confutation of its major exponents (Sextus Empiricus, Huet, and Bayle) in a work written by the *Abbé* and Sorbonne theologian Claude-Joseph Boncerf, entitled *Le vrai philosophe, ou l’usage de la philosophie relativement à la société civile, à la vérité et à la vertu, avec l’histoire, l’exposition exacte et la réfutation du Pyrrhonisme ancien et moderne* (Paris: Babuty Fils, 1762). Boncerf follows de Crousaz for his criticism (see *Models* II, p. 97), and Deslandes for his historical reconstruction (in the *Mémoires de Trévoux* a reviewer states that it would have been more appropriate to consult Brucker: MT, January 1762, p. 159).

A “historical compendium of the systems of ancient and modern philosophy” is outlined in the initial chapter of the *Essai de philosophie élémentaire, sur le système de l’univers ou des lois du monde physique, du monde moral et du monde intellectuel, pour servir de préservatif contre l’athéisme moderne* ([Paris?], 1773), by Beaux de Maguielles, a lawyer in the parliament of Languedoc. The ancient patristic theme of an “antidote” to the poisons spread by philosophers was also revived by *Abbé* Jean Saury, a university teacher in Montpellier, in his *Cours de philosophie*, in the second part in particular, entitled the *Éléments de métaphysique, ou Préservatif contre le Matérialisme, l’Athéisme et le Déisme. Ouvrage dans lequel*



*on a tâché de présenter de la manière la plus claire tout ce qu'on sait touchant de la spiritualité, l'immortalité, la liberté de l'âme, l'influence de la loi naturelle et la divinité de la Religion Chrétienne, et on y répond de la manière la plus solide aux objections des plus fameux Déistes* (Paris: Saillant, 1773), 2 duodecimo volumes (note that in section II, which is devoted to “particular metaphysics”, there is a brief chapter containing a critique description of the “systems elaborated by Aristotle, the Epicureans, the Spinozists, the Pythagoreans, the Manicheans, the Gentiles, the Anthropomorphists, the Fatalists, the Idealists, and the Egoists”, namely, by those who maintain that only their own souls exist: vol. II, pp. 38–45).

With their attacks on what they perceive as modern philosophical mistakes, these writers embody a renewal of ancient apologetics, while others take up the Church Fathers' polemic against the philosophy of the Gentiles. This was the case of André-Joseph Panckoucke, a staunch Jansenist and the founder of a famous family of booksellers and editors. He was also the author of the anonymous *Essais sur les philosophes, ou les Égaréments de la raison sans la foi* (Amsterdam: aux dépens de la Compagnie, 1743), the title page of which quotes the Pauline verse “Dicentes se esse sapientes stulti facti sunt” (Rm 1:22). As a part of this invective against pagan philosophy, chapter VIII deals in particular with “the various sects of philosophers, their opposition to one another, the boldness of their inventions, and the oddity of their sentiments” (pp. 45–57). But the remaining chapters also contain many passages relating to the history of philosophy, which are to be used in condemnation of ancient thinkers, seen here as destined to err because of their lack of divine grace. Worthy of note here are the remarks published in the *Bibliothèque Française*: “When philosophers are considered from a viewpoint that many will consider to be in agreement with truth; I mean, when they are placed in the time in which they lived and are compared with their contemporaries, no impartial mind will refuse to praise them somehow. When they are moved to another world, however, and placed under the economy of divine grace, or they are considered as a whole, side by side with the early Christians, or again, more particularly, when a philosopher is compared with St Paul, then a trial begins which inevitably casts shame and confusion on them”: BF, XXXIX (1744), p. 186.

Panckoucke devotes a chapter of his work to the idolatry practised by the ancient philosophers, a theme which was to be picked up by other writers dealing with the history of philosophy, with differing judgements. The anonymous *Discours sur la décadence de l'idolâtrie, où l'on fait voir que cette décadence doit être uniquement attribuée à Jésus Christ et à la publication de son Évangile* (MT, 1751, 1, pp. 991–1017) “looks at the history of philosophy” in order to demonstrate that philosophers did not contribute in any way to the collapse of idolatry either before or after the advent of the Christian religion. Chevalier de Méhégan (see above, Chap. 2, Introd., e), in his *Origine, progrès et décadence de l'idolâtrie* (Paris: P.-D. Brocas, 1757), on the other hand, held a different view. This “history of idolatry”, which aims to show the “bewilderments of the human mind”, and hence the “need for revelation”, comes up against the history of philosophy on more than one occasion. In chapter VI, for example, the doctrine of the two principles is related to the very origin of philosophy. Philosophy originated among shepherds, who found themselves in a

position most conducive to meditation on the mysteries of nature: faced with the good and evil which can be perceived in reality, the best solution seemed to be to admit the existence of two opposite principles, and this doctrine was adopted first by the Chaldeans and then by the Greeks and the Romans. Through symbols and representations, the *esprit de système* multiplied the gods subordinate to each of the two principles; hence the mistakes made by philosophers were disseminated among the population (pp. 101–108). But the negative impact of philosophy is not a constant element. Chapter X ('Décadence de l'idolâtrie'), in fact, shows that the development of philosophy in Greece – and the resulting clarification of the fundamental notions of metaphysics, physics, and ethics – greatly contributed to the crisis of mythological religion. "Hence", remarks the author, following the *philosophes*, "while the great raised temples in worship of the gods of mythology, and the people offered gifts and sacrifices on the altars of these gods, a small number of obscure citizens gathered under porticoes and dared to look at their shrines and considered as less than nothing those imaginary beings which made their fellow-citizens tremble" (pp. 186–187; for an analogous presentation of Greek philosophers in Diderot, see above, p. 31).

The protagonists and victims of this struggle against mythology and idolatry were Anaxagoras, Aspasia, and Socrates, who was "the victim of a noble but dangerous sincerity. And yet, his blood yielded good fruit for the cause of truth" (p. 189). In Rome, where philosophy had disseminated widely, the battle was carried on by Cicero, while the rest of the world continued in its primitive cult idolatry. Such was the situation when the Christian religion emerged, and its triumphal advance swept away idolatrous religion, despite the efforts made by philosophers like Celsus, who attempted to "cover idolatry under the venerable veil of philosophy" (p. 198). The great Enlightenment themes of the struggle against superstition and the diffusion of the light of reason thanks to philosophy are thus grafted onto the traditional polemic against the pagans. This is, in truth, rather a suspicious undertaking, considering the orientation of the author himself, and it provoked a prompt reaction from Fréron, who had designated himself as the custodian of Catholic orthodoxy.

Another writer who dealt with late ancient philosophy was the Jesuit Claude-François Nonnotte, in a work entitled *Les philosophes des trois premiers siècles de l'Église, ou Portraits historiques des philosophes payens qui ayant embrassé le Christianisme en sont devenus les défenseurs* (Paris: Crapart, 1789). Nonnotte was also known for his disputes with Voltaire, whose historiographical mistakes he denounced. In the same field, we can also quote the *Histoire critique de l'Éclectisme, ou des nouveaux Platoniciens* (no place of publication, 1766, 2 Vols), a work by Abbé Guillaume Maleville, who had already published *La religion naturelle et la révélation* (1756–1758) and a few years later was to refute the ideas on religion expressed by Rousseau in his *Émile*. In the 'Préface' Maleville explicitly declares that he wrote the work in order to oppose the article *Éclectisme* in the *Encyclopédie* as well as Brucker's *Historia critica*. Diderot is accused of intentionally distorting "the facts of philosophical history" concerning the early centuries of the Christian era, thus depriving "the arguments proving the divinity of Christianity of all their power". Brucker is contested on the other hand because he maintained that the

Church derived some of its doctrines from Neoplatonism, and thus failed in its task as the “faithful guardian” of the *depositum fidei* (‘Préface’, I, pp. X–XIV; see also pp. XV–XVII, where Deslandes’ *Histoire critique* is also mentioned and defined as “a superficial work, albeit in a pleasing style, which enjoyed some fame which it did not deserve”).

The *Histoire critique de l’Éclectisme* is divided into four dissertations. The first, which takes up the entire volume I, is a history of ‘eclecticism’ from Ammonius Saccas up to the death of Hypatia, complemented by a series of critical *remarques* on the entry ‘Éclectisme’. The second examines the main errors of the eclectic philosophers – and, more in general, by the ancients – with regard to religion (the fundamental mistake is the denial of creation on account of the axiom *nihil ex nihilo*). The third criticizes the theory held by Brucker and others concerning the influence exerted by Platonism on the theology of the Fathers (for the antecedents to this question, see *Models*, II, pp. 96, 307, and 527; the theory maintaining the Fathers’ close dependence on Plato’s thought, particularly on the *Timaeus*, had also been taken up, for example, by Voltaire, who knew Plato through Dacier’s commentaries: see the entry on Plato which appeared in 1765 and was subsequently included in the *Dictionnaire philosophique*). The fourth and last dissertation is also directed against Brucker and aims at demonstrating the orthodoxy of the doctrines elaborated by Pseudo-Dionysius: they are judged to be totally opposed to the “system of emanations”, hence, if taken according to their real meaning, they provide no support at all for the “mistakes made by ancient and modern Quietists” (*Histoire critique de l’Éclectisme*, II, pp. 252–320).

The ambivalence of the Fathers towards the pagan philosophers thus reappears in those Catholic writers who dealt with the history of ancient thought. Writers who were more inflexible on a doctrinal level emphasized the incompatibility between Christian religion and pagan philosophy, as Bayle had done, whereas other thinkers took up the theory which stated that there is a fundamental agreement between Greek philosophy and Christian doctrine. This concordist perspective was occasionally linked with questions related to the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, which, from a philosophical and scientific point of view, were still the object of debate. This is the case of *L’origine ancienne de la physique nouvelle, où l’on voit, dans les entretiens par lettres, ce que la physique nouvelle a de commun avec l’ancienne* (Paris: J. Clousier, 1734), in 3 octavo volumes, by the Jesuit Noël Regnault, a strong adherent of Cartesianism. Resting on the belief that knowledge of the self and of sensible beings provided by “physics”, gradually raises us up to the “author of the universe”, *Père* Regnault intended to formulate a balanced appraisal of the contribution of the ancients to the development of science, and he identified several “conformities” between the ancients and the moderns.

The most strictly historical treatment is contained in letter V, in which the unprejudiced Eudoxus, and Aristo, a young physicist who is prejudicially in favour of the moderns, discuss “the ideas, characters, and the series of major physicists, both ancient and modern” (*L’origine ancienne de la physique nouvelle*, I, pp. 34–83). The survey begins with Adam, Noah, Zoroaster, Abraham, and other Biblical figures; it neglects the “ancient peoples of the East” and concentrates

on 25 Greek “physicists” (grouped into the Ionian and the Italic school), and subsequently on Lucretius, Seneca, Pliny, and Plutarch. Regnault also mentions the Arabs (Avicenna and Averroes) and gives a positive appraisal of the activity of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, thus departing from the current more critical view of Scholasticism. “Look at him by way of an example”, he writes of Aquinas, “and his writings on the principles of nature, the sky and the world; as a commentator, he follows Aristotle and goes after him, and with marvellous sagacity, he denounces the obscure and ambiguous views of the physicist, who seems to conceal himself behind mannered obscurity, and forces him to expose himself” (p. 72). Among modern thinkers, Regnault mentions Cardano, Gassendi, and Descartes (pp. 75–80), the Jesuits Athanasius Kircher, Caspar Schott, and Honoré Fabri, and then Pascal, Mariotte, and Newton, while no mention is made of Bacon or Galileo. Regnault’s concordist view is especially evident, however, in letter XI, in which he maintains that the ancient physicists conceived of God as a spiritual Being, immense and simple, benign and provident, the “avenger of sin” (II, p. 23).

Following the same line of thought we also find Vincent-Louis Dutens, an opponent of Voltaire and Rousseau, and editor of Leibniz’s *Opera omnia* (1768), with his *Recherches sur l’origine des découvertes attribuées aux modernes, où l’on démontre que nos plus célèbres philosophes ont puisé la plupart de leurs connaissances dans les ouvrages des Anciens: et que plusieurs vérités importantes sur la Religion ont été connues des Sages du Paganisme* (Paris: V.ve Duchesne, 1766), 2 Vols.<sup>1</sup> This work, which, incidentally, drew vigorous criticism from Nageon and Hissmann, is divided into four sections, in which the theories held by modern philosophers and scientists are systematically traced back to doctrines once held by the ancient Greek thinkers. Part I concerns the opinions held by Descartes, Malebranche, and Locke with regard to ideas, the art of thinking, and the sensible qualities; part II examines the systems of Leibniz, Buffon, and the Englishman John Turbeville Needham (1713–1781), as well as questions of general physics and astronomy; part III is devoted to particular physics and to the medical and mathematical sciences; and the final part concerns God and the soul, the origin of the world and the concept of creation, which is precisely identified in a passage from Plato’s *Timaeus*. Dutens too seems to appreciate the Scholastics’ work of commentary: in mentioning modern research into the acceleration of motion, he refers the reader to Aristotle’s *Physics* and *De coelo* and the relevant commentaries

<sup>1</sup>The Italian translation of this work (*Pagine delle scoperte attribuite a’ moderni* [...], *Prima edizione Veneta purgata da molti errori che si trovano in quella di Napoli*, Venice: T. Bettinelli, 1789) also contains a third (anonymous) volume entitled *Tentativo di una transazione tra gli antichi e i moderni intorno alla preminenza sull’invenzione, miglioramento e perfezione delle scienze e delle arti, come una conclusione necessaria al libro dell’Origine delle scoperte attribuite a’ moderni* (318 pages). The volume includes an introduction (pp. 3–39) tracing the history of the *querelle des anciens et des modernes*, with a special consideration of Italian authors; it is made up of 19 chapters: chapters IX (on logic and metaphysics), X (on physics), and XVII–XIX (on theology, morals, the concepts of time and space, the creation of the world) touch upon the history of philosophy.

by Averroes and Duns Scotus – the latter is quoted through the work of Antonio Ferrari, *Veteris et recentioris philosophiae dogmata Joannis Dunsii Scoti doctrinis accomodata* (Venice, 1757).

Within a still broader framework we can place the work by Jean-Antoine Rigoley de Juvigny entitled *De la décadence des lettres et des mœurs, depuis les Grecs et les Romains jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Mériqot le jeune, 1787), which Ernesti placed among the general writings on literary history, and which constitutes a sort of reverse history of the advances made by the human mind. The author – who also wrote a *Discours sur le progrès des lettres en France* (Paris, 1772) – engaged in a polemic with Voltaire, but was praised by the Abbé Sabatier de Castres, a well-known opponent of the *philosophes*. The perceived boldness and conceit of modern philosophers is the target of criticism in the final part of the book, but references to ancient philosophers are scarce and mainly concern Plato and Seneca.

(b) *La Harpe's "literary history" and the reaction to the esprit philosophique*

Let us close this introductory survey with Jean-François de La Harpe (1739–1803), a writer who embodies one aspect of the French culture of the later eighteenth century which emerged as a result of the Revolution. On the one hand we find intellectuals like Condorcet, who were victims of the excesses of the Terror, but continued to believe in the revolutionary ideals which they saw as the coherent result of the philosophy of the *Lumières*. But there were others who, while not denying their cultural education, made a drastic shift to the opposite ideological side, becoming opponents of the most radical *philosophes* and standing up in defence of the religion that had previously aroused their indifference or criticism. This was the case of La Harpe, a poet, dramatist, and literary critic. La Harpe had been asked to teach a course on literary history at the 'Lycée', a sort of non-institutionalized university founded in Paris in 1786, where lectures were given by the most prominent members of the 'philosophical' party, from Condorcet to Garat and Marmontel. A fervent revolutionary, La Harpe was imprisoned during the Terror, only to emerge converted to Christianity and with an entirely different ideological orientation, so much so that, in the speech he gave on the reopening of the 'Lycée' (31st December 1794), he railed against the "modern Vandals", the "revolutionary tyrants" who "declared war on reason, morals, letters, and the arts".

The lectures given by La Harpe between 1786 and 1798 were printed by the publisher H. Agasse under the title *Lycée, ou Cours de Littérature ancienne et moderne* (Paris, an VII – an XIII [1799–1805]), 16 tomes in 19 octavo volumes, which were reprinted several times as well as being translated into Italian with additions by Abate Antonio Meneghelli (on the latter, see below, Sect. 4.4).<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>2</sup>A further, much more concise, example of literary history is provided by Abbé Antoine de Courmand, a teacher of French literature at the *Collège royal*, in his *Tableau des révolutions de la littérature ancienne et moderne* (Paris: Buisson, 1786), XXXII–301 pp. (octavos), on which cf. JE, 1787, 1/1, pp. 238–247. In this "histoire générale des lettres", references to the history of philosophy are quite limited in extent but are nevertheless interesting on account of the particular perspective taken, which concerns the relationship between philosophy and *goût* (see, for example,

author's intent was to outline a vast "reasoned history of all the arts of the mind and the imagination, from Homer to the present day, only excluding the exact sciences and the physical sciences" (*Lycée*, tome I, 'Préface', p. v). La Harpe died before he could complete this vast project, and the work, whose last volumes were published posthumously, is limited to Greek and Roman Antiquity and to the French literature of the modern centuries. It is divided into three parts: the first is devoted to the ancients and is constituted by the first three tomes divided into four volumes; the second, written in the style of Voltaire, is entitled *Siècle de Louis XIV* (tomes IV–VII); and the third part deals with the eighteenth century (tomes VIII–XVI in 11 Vols). The link between Antiquity and the modern centuries is examined at the beginning of part II, by an 'Introduction, ou Discours sur l'état des lettres en Europe, depuis la fin du siècle qui a suivi celui d'Auguste, jusqu'au règne de Louis XIV, tel qu'il fut prononcé en 1797' (tome IV, pp. 1–78).

Catering to the needs of a broader public, La Harpe intended to produce a work which was half-way between a "book of erudition", reserved exclusively for the learned, and an "elementary book" for schools. While aimed at a heterogeneous public, he wished in particular to address "orators and poets" ('Préface', pp. VI–VII). In the *Lycée's* curriculum, ample space was devoted to the history of philosophy, though, right from the beginning La Harpe's primarily literary perspective shows little inclination to speculation. "When teaching is addressed to the imagination and the heart, as well as to the mind and to taste, it flies before them, so to speak", observes La Harpe in the 'Idées préliminaires' he added to his account of ancient philosophy, "but when it merely addresses itself to reason, it requires a public which is really determined to learn. Reason is also able to arouse interest and provide enjoyment for the mind by training it. However, this is not the right place to push reason to extreme effort and mental strain, which we reserve for erudite scholars who are learned by profession [ . . . ]. It is up to them to compare Plato and Aristotle, Epicurus and Zeno, the Porch and the Academy, and either oppose them or reconcile them with one another, in any case to try to understand them, even when they themselves never reached an agreement [ . . . ]" (tome III/2, pp. 2–3).

This tends to belittle the work of those historians of philosophy who, like Brucker and Deslandes, "spent their lives wandering through this labyrinth", that is to say, amidst the "multitude of systems" produced by philosophers, which are discarded one by one. At the source of these repeated errors – and here La Harpe takes up a common theme of eighteenth-century historiography, particularly present in Batteux – is the pretence of arriving at a knowledge of the origin of things, and consequently of "placing oneself with certitude in the shoes of their author, and recreating in their imagination the work of divine thought". Among all the creators of theoretical systems throughout the history of philosophy, Descartes and Leibniz are the least justifiable "because so many centuries of experience should have led them to understand that we have to limit ourselves to the study of facts and to the

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on the Stoics and Epicureans p. 54, on Fontenelle p. 217, and on Locke, Newton, and Shaftesbury p. 260).

observation of phenomena, without claiming to be able to guess the first causes of things". "Two powerful geniuses", Newton and Locke gave up this endeavour, but this does not imply that such speculative abuse has been abandoned: the *philosophes* of the time – and here the author mentions d'Holbach's *Système de la nature* – turned directly away from tradition, maintaining that the world does not require causes and that everything exists for itself and is preserved according to a necessary and eternal order (tome III/2, pp. 3–4).

After outlining this general picture, in which the epistemological positions professed by Condillac are merged with La Harpe's own apologetic concerns, La Harpe acknowledges that some ancient philosophers were worthy of merit. Most notable of these is Aristotle, who "made logic into a science and reasoning into an art". He failed to make full use of his discovery, however, and, "by misusing those abstractions which were known as categories and universals, he led the Scholastics who were to follow him down the wrong paths". With a lack of great conviction, La Harpe takes up the traditional theme of the 'comparison' between Plato and Aristotle and proclaims the superiority of the former, while recognizing the soundness of Aristotle's treatment of poetics, rhetoric, morals, and politics, which make use of the "spirit of analysis" and rest on experience as their underlying basis. Plato is taken as the starting point of a "succinct account of the most profitable things which can be drawn from the philosophy of the ancients". This account is relatively long – note that in the first edition, the chapter 'Philosophie ancienne' takes up 347 pages – but it is limited to only four thinkers (Plato, Plutarch, Cicero, and Seneca), who "contain the entire foundation of the philosophy of the Greeks, since that produced by the Latins is borrowed entirely from them". These thinkers are also "renowned writers", and hence particularly appropriate to the course's literary bias (tome III/2, pp. 5–11).

In the *Cours de littérature*'s system of periodization, the significant moments are classical Antiquity and the century of Louis XIV, which constitutes an unparalleled model. The medieval age is presented as a cultural "night" or "desert", which stirred into life again with Dante and Petrarch and later in Florence with the Medici, until the time of Louis XIV, when "a brilliant light pervaded the world and still today, more than ever, outshines envious mediocrity and presumptuous ignorance" (tome IV, p. 6). The polemic against "the eighteenth-century barbarians who are called 'philosophers'" which can just be perceived in the initial pages of the *Discours sur l'état des lettres en Europe* [...] *jusqu'au règne de Louis XIV*, bursts forth openly in the following pages and is taken up again in the introduction to seventeenth-century French philosophy. Just like eloquence, this philosophy is presided over by religion, since it has "always rested on these primary and universal bases, namely, the belief in a God and the immortality of the immaterial soul, which are mother ideas", continues La Harpe, making a critical reference to the deistic outlook so widespread in the eighteenth century. The consequences of these ideas "for the right-minded and the righteous-hearted, extend infinitely further than it is believed in our time because, if properly grasped and developed, they come to encompass the need for revelation. It is precisely in this sense that religion is involved in all good philosophy; and it is precisely for this reason that the philosophy of the last

century was frequently sublime and very rarely became lost, almost without danger and always without scandal". Apart from atheists, everyone admits that the idea of a first being lies at the basis of all metaphysical knowledge and all moral virtue, and, furthermore, provides the only satisfactory explanation for all physical phenomena, because motion, which is the source of all phenomena, cannot be explained without a "first mover", as Newton himself acknowledged. Hence "true philosophy" is inseparable from religion, as attested by "the most transcendent minds": Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Cicero – among the ancients – and Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, and Fénelon – among the moderns (tome VII, pp. 192–193).

The previous opposition which had been of a strictly philosophical nature – between Newton and Locke on one hand, and all the creators of metaphysical systems, both ancient and modern, on the other – is therefore superseded by the traditional religious theme of a universal agreement between all major philosophers. It is interesting to see here a criticism of the "fanaticism" that ensues when the "curiosity" which always accompanies human reason does not admit the need for a "higher guide" to indicate the right path. La Harpe could still recall the criticisms raised during the Enlightenment against religious fanaticism, but at the same time he had also just lived through the dramatic events of the Revolution, hence he can observe that, "whatever was said about it, fanaticism, both of a religious and a philosophical kind, is not a product of religion nor of philosophy: rather, it is a product of pride, which is a violent and dreadful power. [...] Fanaticism lies when it speaks in the name of heaven or reason; it is equally denied by philosophy and religion: indeed, it offends and distorts them both, and both abhor it. It draws arguments from the one and turns them into sophisms; from the other it draws dogmas and turns them into heresies, and this impure alloy has engendered all the evils that have weighed on the world, starting from Arianism, which made church councils end in bloodshed, up to the philosophism of this century, which has made France the theatre of all kinds of crimes" (tome VII, pp. 193–195).

Seventeenth-century French thinkers are divided into two groups: "metaphysicians" (Descartes, Pascal, Fénelon's *Traité de l'existence de Dieu*, Malebranche, Bayle) and "moralists", where Fénelon appears alongside Pierre Nicole, the Jansenist Jacques-Joseph Duguet, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, and Saint-Evremond (tome VII, pp. 192–221 and 222–296). Given La Harpe's polemic and apologetic aim, much more space is given over to more recent philosophy, which takes up the two last tomes (in three volumes), under the title *Philosophie du Dix-huitième siècle*. In the 'Introduction' (tome XV, pp. 1–18), La Harpe objects to the legitimacy of the name *siècle philosophe*, which his contemporaries had used to label themselves, because "reason is an enemy of charlatanism, and it certainly takes some of this to endow oneself with a title which one should [only] expect from posterity", as happened for the enlightened centuries of Pericles, Augustus, Leo X, and Louis XIV. In criticizing the alleged philosophical primacy of the eighteenth century, La Harpe attacks, among other things, Condorcet's "ridiculous" assertion that mathematical calculus can be applied to the moral and legal domains. But his negative judgement applies not only to French philosophers but also to more northern thinkers, and even to Kant himself. In a moment of misjudgement, he



manages to associate Kant with Swedenborg, the well-known Swedish mystic and spiritualist, whom Kant had targeted in his *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* (“So, is it really in the North that this century should look for the merits which earn it philosophical primacy? With the exception of the natural sciences, irrefutable History will show in the case of Germany nothing but the idiocy of 20 enlightened sects, the reveries of Swedenborg, Kant, and their disciples – a disgrace for the human mind – as well as the dark mysteries created by the upper classes of occult freemasonry, which, after they merged with revolutionary philosophy, have been revealed enough to be viewed forever as the horror of human nature”: tome XV, p. 14).

La Harpe divides eighteenth-century French thinkers into three ‘classes’. The first is comprised of those “superior men who were philosophers and writers at the same time” and who “have rendered some service to philosophy: Fontenelle, who reconciled it with the Graces; Buffon who, like Plato and Pliny, gave it the language of imagination; Montesquieu, who was able to apply both the former and the latter to political speculation; D’Alembert who has set out [in the *Encyclopédie*] all the achievements of the human mind according to a clear and methodical order; and Condillac, who illuminated Locke’s metaphysics with beams of evidence” (tome XV, ‘Introduction’, p. 16; the treatment of these writers take up pages 19–214, about 80 of which are devoted to Condillac, who is praised the most). The second class consists of moralists and economists, from Vauvenargues and Duclos to Quesnay and Turgot (tome XV, pp. 215–284). The third class, “unfortunately the most influential one, has supplied nothing but sophists who – with greater or lesser literary talent [...] and under the false name of ‘philosophers’ – first acted as the enemies of religion and then, as an unavoidable result, as the enemies of all moral, social, and political order: in a word, the fathers of the French Revolution” (tome, XV, p. 16).

La Harpe’s account of these modern sophists is particularly long: 40 pages are devoted to François-Vincent Toussaints, who had affirmed the existence of purely natural morals in *Les mœurs* (1748); 167 pages to Helvétius; and 313 pages to Diderot, whose major works are examined (note that La Harpe also credits him with having written Morelly’s *Code de la nature*, an error promptly pointed out by Barbier). But the author died before he could complete his review of the other “sophists” (Voltaire, Rousseau, Mably, Condorcet..., besides the multitude of anonymous writers). After the chapter on Diderot, the last volume of the *Philosophie du Dix-huitième siècle* includes a few short “fragments” on Boulanger, d’Holbach, and Rousseau, along with a reflection entitled ‘Pour l’histoire de la philosophie du dix-huitième siècle’ (tome XVI/2, pp. 314–375). At the end of this volume we also find the ‘Fragments d’une Apologie de la religion chrétienne’, pp. 841–859, namely the outline of a rather lengthy work targeted against the incredulous of all centuries. To complete his apologetic work on a historical and doctrinal level, La Harpe had also planned to write a poem entitled *La religion*).

An example of the arguments used by La Harpe in his apologetic history of philosophy can be found in the opening pages of the chapter on Helvétius. Here Helvétius is contrasted with Condillac on account of the fact that he did not use the rigorous method which should characterize true philosophy. “If Condillac is

a philosopher, it is impossible for Helvétius to be one too. Philosophy is nothing other than the search for truth, and the method required for this search has been acknowledged and admitted ever since Aristotle made reasoning into an art which we call logic. He who, in philosophy, avoids or neglects the processes to be followed in speculative matters, where they are indispensably necessary, reveals from the very beginning his ignorance or bad faith: he behaves, in metaphysics and in morals, just like someone who does not take into account facts in physics and replaces experience by hypothesis". Helvétius used a method of procedure which neglected "precision in terminology, the concatenation of propositions, accuracy in definition, and consequential rigour", and he is therefore to be contrasted with true philosophers who, in various fields, "have written as logicians". These true philosophers are those like Clarke and Fénelon when they formulate their demonstration of the existence of God and the immortality of the soul; Malebranche himself, "when, despite his errors regarding the 'vision of God', admirably explains the errors made by the senses and the imagination"; and finally Dumarsais, "when he develops the metaphysics of language" (tome XV, pp. 327–328).

The sections on the history of philosophy included in the *Lycée* were meant to counter the *Philosophie ancienne et moderne* by the materialist Naigeon (see above, Sect. 1.4). In particular, the *Philosophie du Dix-huitième siècle* was keenly praised by the Catholic journal *Mélanges de philosophie*, which proved to be even more inflexible in its views than La Harpe, and did not share his positive judgement of Montesquieu, D'Alembert, and Condillac. By contrast, the *Philosophie du Dix-huitième siècle* provoked negative reactions in Enlightenment circles. Let us mention, for example, the judgement formulated by the great bibliographer Antoine Barbier, who at the time was librarian at the *Conseil d'État*. Before meticulously pointing out a series of historical and bibliographical mistakes, he describes the *Philosophie du Dix-huitième siècle* as a "tedious jumble", unfavourably received by the devout themselves, "a work written throughout *ab irato*, which makes one thing clear, namely that Mr. La Harpe was totally unacquainted with philosophical matters and, by his being too eager to expand on what he knew nothing about, unavoidably uttered much nonsense, which he happened to do frequently, and not only in this work but more generally in all of his writings" (Barbier, *Examen de plusieurs assertions*, pp. 6–7).

Barbier even cites a long passage from the review which appeared in the *Publiciste* of 17th Ventôse of that year (8th March, 1805), which is worth quoting here because it reveals a clear awareness of the inadequacy of comprehensive and very general historiographical categories when the aim of a work is to make ideological criticism. "What is 'eighteenth century philosophy'? Nobody so far has been able to tell us, and would probably be highly embarrassed to do so. Does something really exist that can be called 'eighteenth century philosophy'? That is to say, a complete, harmonized system, a doctrinal corpus commonly taught and adopted, so that one may affirm, these are the principles, this is the philosophy of the eighteenth century? Is this abstract being, this dominant philosophy to be looked for in Montesquieu or Diderot? In Helvétius or Vauvenargues? Who is it – Condillac, Rousseau, or Fontenelle – who set the tone of his century? Who is the philosopher of

his century? Or will it be maintained that they all influenced the general opinion?”. And after mentioning the very different political and theological conceptions of the major philosophers of the century, the reviewer remarks ironically: “[...] so it would seem that precisely these diametrically opposed opinions gave shape to a body of philosophy which we should term ‘eighteenth century philosophy’. But if we think we will find this demonstration in Mr. La Harpe’s work, we will have to look at length” (Barbier, *Examen*, pp. 20–21; regarding the concept of *philosophie dominante*, already present in Deslandes, see *Models*, II, p. 201).

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### 3.1 André-Adrien Pluquet (1716–1790)

#### *Examen du Fatalisme*

**3.1.1** *Abbé* Pluquet was born in Bayeux (Normandy) on 14th June, 1716. After studying in his home town and Caen, he moved to Paris in 1742 to attend courses in theology at the Sorbonne, obtaining his baccalaureate in 1745 and graduating in 1750. In order to pay his way through university, he worked as a preceptor, having among his pupils Léopold-Charles de Choiseul (the brother of the renowned minister of Louis XV, later bishop of Evreux and then archbishop of Albi and Cambrai), who obtained a pension for him of 2,000 lire, thus giving him financial

independence. In regular contact with Parisian intellectual circles, *Abbé* Pluquet befriended the elderly Fontenelle, Helvétius, and Montesquieu. In 1764 archbishop Choiseul called him to Cambrai to act as his vicar and collaborator; in 1768 he became canon of Cambrai; in 1775 the government appointed him ‘censor’ for *belles lettres*; and the following year he was appointed chair of moral philosophy at the *Collège de France*. From 1778 he taught ecclesiastical history, but 4 years later he resigned from this position, keeping only his title of honorary professor, and devoted himself entirely to study. He died of apoplexy on 18th September, 1790.

**3.1.2** *Abbé* Pluquet was a man of many religious interests (he was regarded as a Jansenist, although his writings show few traces of the Jansenist doctrines). He began his literary career with a vast apologetic work, whose objective, measured tone distinguished it from traditional dogmatism: the *Examen du Fatalisme, ou Exposition et réfutation des différents systèmes de Fatalisme qui ont partagé les philosophes sur l’origine du monde, sur la nature de l’âme, et sur le principe des actions humaines*, which appeared anonymously in Paris in 1757 and was printed by Didot and Barrois. This historical and critical analysis of ‘fatalism’ (namely, of “a system which assumes that everything exists necessarily and attributes all phenomena of nature to a power devoid of freedom”: *Examen*, I, p. 1) takes up three duodecimo volumes, the first of which constitutes the object of our analysis because in its structure and subject matter it is a general history of philosophy.

After the publication of this work, the encyclopaedists asked *Abbé* Pluquet to join their undertaking by writing a number of articles, but he declined and carried on his work as an apologist by publishing his *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire des égarements de l’esprit humain par rapport à la religion chrétienne, ou Dictionnaire des hérésies, des erreurs et des schismes, précédé d’un Discours dans lequel on recherche quelle a été la religion primitive des hommes, les changements qu’elle a soufferts jusqu’à la naissance du Christianisme, les causes générales, les liaisons et les effets des hérésies qui ont divisé les chrétiens* (Paris, 1762, 2 Vols; Besançon, 1817; Paris, 1845 and 1847), which he dedicated to Choiseul, his illustrious pupil, who was then archbishop of Albi. This work, in which heretical figures and doctrines are presented in alphabetical order starting with Abelard, has an opening *Discours*, which was highly praised and even compared with Bossuet’s *Discours sur l’histoire universelle*. It is divided into two parts: the first, which extends to the advent of Christianity, uses a framework taken from the *historia philosophica* and deals with primitive religion and its “alteration”, the origin of philosophy and the “changes it brought to religion” among the Eastern peoples, and the religious principles held by the Greek philosophers and the Hebrews. The second is divided into centuries, according to the divisions of ecclesiastical history, and constitutes a sort of *histoire de l’esprit humain* whose object is to set heresies within the “political and civil state” and the “state of religion”, and the “human mind in relation to the sciences and letters” of each century. There are obvious connections between this *Discours* and the *Examen du fatalisme*, and indeed Pluquet repeatedly refers readers to this work for a more detailed account of the subject matter.

In the years that followed, Pluquet contributed to the ethical and social debate of his time with two works: *De la sociabilité* (Paris, 1767, 2 Vols), in which he maintained, against Hobbes, that man is inclined by nature to sociability, goodness, and virtue; and the *Traité philosophique et politique sur le luxe* (Paris, 1786, 2 Vols), in which he addressed the much debated question concerning the advantages and disadvantages of luxury in civil societies. A third work, *De la superstition et de l'enthousiasme*, appeared posthumously in Paris in 1804, edited by Dominique Ricard, who added a *Notice sur la vie et les écrits de l'auteur*. Pluquet also published a *Lettre à un ami sur les arrêts du Conseil du 30 août 1777 concernant la librairie et l'imprimerie* ([London], 1777), in defence of literary copyright (a second and a third *Lettre* came out the following year, also anonymously) and edited the translation from Latin of a work by Père Noël (*Les livres classiques de l'Empire de la Chine* [...] (Paris, 1784, 7 Vols), adding some *Observations sur l'origine, la nature et les effets de la philosophie morale et politique dans cet Empire*. Among the works which remained in manuscript form are a *Traité philosophique sur l'origine de la mythologie*, cut short by his death, the seven volumes which make up the *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire universelle*, and the *Considérations sur l'éducation*.

**3.1.3** The apologetic themes which inspired Abbé Pluquet are illustrated in the introduction to the *Examen du Fatalisme*, which describes how inadequately the advocates of religion have hitherto confronted the doctrines questioning the existence of a creative and free intelligence, the distinction between soul and body, and man's freedom. These doctrines, the history and theory of which are not well known, have been only partially confuted and subjected to a criticism aimed more at past opponents than "modern fatalists". "Therefore", Pluquet points out, "what is most necessary today is a work showing the absurdity of all the principles underlying Fatalism. This foundation appears to be lacking in almost all treatises which have been published on religion" (*Examen*, p. v).

Pluquet intends to fill this gap with his work, whose general structure he goes on to explain. The work rests on sound historical bases, because "errors are illnesses of the mind: just like the body's illnesses, they have their own symptoms and causes, which we must recognize in order to fight them successfully. So in order to confute the inner attitude which ascribes everything to fate, it is necessary to seek its origin, follow its progress, and make sure that all its principles have been correctly grasped". Pluquet explicitly relates this reconstruction to the larger field of the *histoire de l'esprit humain*: "This kind of research will cover one of the most peculiar portions of the history of the human mind; it will allow us to see man for the first time turning his tremulous gaze towards his origin and – as it were – unsteadily ascend to general truths, connecting phenomena, enhancing the development of the sciences, and formulating systems which embrace nature". Once this "picture of the various ways in which the human mind has strayed (*égarements*) concerning its origin and the cause generating the world" has been outlined, Pluquet will proceed to "reduce" the various doctrines of the fatalists – as they have been expressed historically – to two fundamental "systems": a Spinoza-oriented monism, and the pluralism of substances, whose principles will be subjected to critical analysis (pp. v–vi).

This attempt to provide a stronger defence of the Christian religion is also of interest from another point of view: *Abbé* Pluquet could be viewed as the advocate of a *nouvelle apologétique*, the result of a combination of Jansenist sensitivity and the values of tolerance and a rejection of prejudice diffused by the Enlightenment, which he did not dismiss as the more traditionalist and extremist apologists did. After demonstrating the need for a systematic and thorough *status quaestionis* on the issue of fatalism, with a view to “making men happier and better more easily”, and after pointing out the advisability of doing the same for all important questions, Pluquet declares that he has used the criterion of impartiality in his work, free from prejudice and open to the positions of others, which are presented with “verisimilitude”. Indeed, “he who takes sides on a question is uniquely concerned with the reasons that favour his position and pays little attention to those against it: according to Bacon, he is like those superstitious people who, once infatuated with the science of omens and astrology, clearly see a fact favourable to it and mention it as a proof, while they pay no heed at all to a multitude of facts contradicting it” (p. XV).

On the contrary, Pluquet continues, a reader should act as an “arbiter”, and it is for this reason that “in confuting Fatalism, I have assumed the habit of scepticism, which is especially suited to humanity and removes prejudices. I have been seeking truth together with the fatalist, instead of fighting him, always keeping in view this wonderful maxim by *Père* Malebranche: ‘a man is another man’s monitor, not his master’” (p. XVI). After quoting a reflection by Pascal concerning the art of persuasion (cf. *Pensées*, ed. Brunschvicg, no. 9), Pluquet distances himself unequivocally from a certain kind of intemperate apologetics which had condemned all philosophers. “Let us reject that sort of blind and unfair zeal, which views fatalists as senseless people incapable of knowing the truth, or as corrupt people who hate the truth and shun it. Is it conceivable to count among the idiots, the wicked, or the voluptuous those like Thales, Anaxagoras, Socrates, Pythagoras, or Plato, or the numerous philosophers whose desire for enlightenment often deprived them of pleasures, to whom humanity owes so many insights as well as the example of so many virtues? From a principle of fairness as well as a principle of charity, we should therefore assume that all erring men are looking for truth; and so we should reach out a helping hand to them. That zeal which makes them offend is a barbarous zeal, whose only effect is to plunge them into an abyss, from which – [by contrast] – lenience and kindness might have pulled them out” (pp. XVII–XVIII).

These introductory pages end, significantly, with a long passage from *Contra epistolam, quam vocant fundamenti*, in which St Augustine criticises those who claim the right to treat the Manicheans harshly. This passage gives us some idea of Pluquet’s speculative background. Besides the masters of the spiritualistic tradition (Augustine, Pascal, Malebranche), Pluquet also refers to Bacon and quotes a passage from the ‘Préface’ to the *Dissertation sur la glace* (1716) by Jean-Jacques Dortous de Mairan, Fontenelle’s successor as permanent secretary to the *Académie des Sciences* (pp. IX–X). This is an early sign of the eclecticism – described by Vernière as “disquieting” – which Pluquet was to manifest in the course of the theoretical discussion of volumes II–III, where he confutes the opposing doctrine

by quoting Aristotle, Descartes, and contemporary empiricism (Vernière, pp. 443–444). Essentially unconvinced of the adequacy of each individual philosophical system and of philosophy in general, which cannot clarify the causes of the world or the origin of man and his destiny without the help of revelation, Pluquet took his arguments from various sources. Indeed, concluding the first volume, he remarks that “in order to formulate a useful confutation of Fatalism, it is not enough to destroy all its principles, but it is necessary to lay down some true principles, defend them against the sophisms of the Pyrrhonian thinker, and demonstrate them to every man capable of reasoning” (*Examen du Fatalisme*, I, p. 459).

In this *pars construens*, the opponent is not only Fatalism, but also Pyrrhonism, whose threatening presence hung over the Catholic apologists of the eighteenth century. When presenting the guidelines to the confutation which follows the historical treatment, Pluquet mentions the sceptics and in particular Bayle, “the most fearsome of all, [who] has discovered the art of joining facts and philosophical questions together, presenting all systems from a multitude of difference perspectives, and defending almost all of them without adopting any of them. He claims that he can find a semblance of truth in the most monstrous opinions, and sufficient difficulties in the most well-founded sentiments to keep his reader uncertain and wavering amidst all that which has been thought” (I, p. 457). Yet the ‘diabolical’ ability which enabled Bayle to disclose the different aspects of a doctrine, avoiding the partiality of the defence lawyer (see *Models*, II, p. 117), is not so far removed from Pluquet’s anti-dogmatic attitude, even though he largely avoided Bayle’s mordant conclusions. In this regard, we can look at the observations made at the beginning of the paragraph on the ancient Sceptics, where Pluquet rejects both the *enthousiasme de système* and the contrasting “enthusiasm” of those who consider it impossible to come to any kind of “satisfying knowledge” about the cause and origin of the world: “There are few systems whose general principles are not attractive enough not to be accepted by human reason, and there are no systems at all which are entirely satisfying; but when general principles have made a vivid impression on the mind, then the difficulties which combat them manifest themselves as mere embarrassments and obscurities to be elucidated and not as reasons for doubting. If these principles have not made a deep and strong impression on the mind, then there is no enthusiasm for the system; the clarity or the force of its principles is felt less, and the strength of the difficulties combating them is felt much more; the principles of the system and its difficulties are viewed as opposite reasons, and one is led to doubt. But doubt itself, which appears to be nothing other than a state of suspension, has – just like the spirit of system – a sort of enthusiasm which rarely keeps within its proper limits” (*Examen du Fatalisme*, I, pp. 139–140).

### 3.1.4 *Examen du Fatalisme*

**3.1.4.1** VOL. I is preceded by a general introduction (pp. I–XX), bears the subtitle *Recherches sur l’origine et le progrès du Fatalisme, depuis la naissance de la Philosophie jusqu’à notre temps* and consists of 464 pages, with a final table of



contents. It is divided into five “epochs” (pp. 1–14; 15–151; 152–238; 239–317; 318–446), which – except for the first – are themselves subdivided into paragraphs, and it closes with an overall treatment entitled ‘Des principes généraux auxquels on peut réduire toutes les opinions et toutes les vues des Fatalistes’ (pp. 446–459). The text contains footnotes with bibliographical references and, in just a few cases, some biographical information and comments by the author. VOL. II (532 pages) has its own introduction (pp. I–X) and is entitled *Exposition et Réfutation du Fatalisme, qui ne suppose qu’une substance dans le monde*. After a brief ‘Exposition des principes de ce système’, the first part (pp. 1–251) is structured into three books, which are divided into sections and then into chapters (I: ‘Les esprits et les corps sont des modifications de l’être nécessaire’; II: ‘La substance nécessaire n’est point un être étendu, mais une substance purement spirituelle, et qui contient tout ce qui est’; III: ‘Il est impossible qu’il y ait plusieurs substances’). It is followed by the ‘Réfutation de ce système’, which is made up of two parts (I: ‘Il n’est point impossible qu’il existe plusieurs substances’; II: ‘Il y a plusieurs substances; et les différents êtres que le monde renferme ne sont point des modifications de l’être nécessaire’). VOL. III (448 pages followed by a general index of the subjects contained in the three volumes) has no introduction and bears the subtitle *Réfutation du Fatalisme qui suppose plusieurs substances dans le monde*; it is divided into five books (I: ‘De l’origine des différentes substances qui existent dans le monde’; II: ‘De la puissance qui a formé le monde visible’; III: ‘De la nature et de la puissance des esprits’; IV: ‘De l’intelligence qui a formé le monde’; V: ‘Des effets de l’opinion du Fatalisme par rapport à la morale’).

**3.1.4.2** The five epochs into which the history of deterministic doctrines is subdivided follow the same pattern as the periodization of the general history of philosophy. The first epoch is that of the “origin of Fatalism” among the ancient peoples of the East. The second extends “from the birth of philosophy among the Greeks up to Christianity” and is divided into four orientations (corresponding to as many paragraphs) in which the Greek schools are grouped according to an order which slightly differs from the traditional groupings, which are usually based on a distinction between the Ionic and the Italic school. The first orientation includes those philosophers who, after showing an early interest in physics, then devoted themselves exclusively to moral reflection (Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Diogenes of Apollonia, Anaxagoras, Archelaus, Socrates, Aristippus, Hegesias, Anniceris, Theodorus, Antisthenes, Diogenes, and Crates). The second orientation is headed by Pythagoras and includes those thinkers who devoted themselves thoroughly to the study of the “origin and nature of the world”, thus elaborating doctrines based on the existence of two principles, matter and a driving force (Ocellus, Empedocles, Timaeus, then Plato, Aristotle, Strato, Xenocrates, Zeno the Stoic, and Chrysippus). The third orientation presents those philosophers who maintained the existence of a unique being (Xenophanes and the Eleatics) or a plurality of atoms in a void (Leucippus, Democritus, and Epicurus). The last orientation groups together the Sceptics (Protagoras, Metrodorus, Anaxarchus, Pyrrho, Arcesilaus, Carneades, and Cicero). Apart from the last group, therefore,

“all the systems created by the Greek philosophers have arisen from the schools of these three philosophers”, namely Thales, Pythagoras, and Xenophanes (*Examen du Fatalisme*, I, p. 16). But after adopting this subdivision based on theories, in concluding his discussion of Greek philosophy, Pluque observes that “the sentiments cultivated by Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and the Academy divided almost all philosophers, and formed five large sects which enveloped, as it were, all the remaining ones”; moreover, following the traditional framework, we must also add the “new sect” of the *Eclecticiens*, founded by Potamon (pp. 150–151).

The third epoch extends from Christianity to the fall of Constantinople and is divided into peoples and religions: Pluquet deals with the “origin and progress of Fatalism” among the Christians, Judaeans, Muslims, Indians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Siamese, and the Tonkinese. The Christians are subdivided into the “Christians of the East” (the Gnostics, Marcion, and the Manichaeans; and it is here that we find Plotinus and Jamblicus’s doctrines of human freedom), and the “Christians of the West”, that is to say, the Scholastic movement resulting from the introduction of Aristotle into the Latin West, which immediately gave rise to the errors made by Amalric of Bène and David of Dinant. Pluquet does not mention the usual three-fold division of Scholasticism, but hints at the gradual diffusion of Peripateticism and presents a general picture of the deterministic doctrines maintained by the Scholastic thinkers, without adding any names: the eternity of the world, the double truth, and astral determinism (with special reference to Pierre d’Ailly’s *Contra astronomos*, judged to be nothing but “a palliative which allowed all the principles of astrological Fatalism to continue to exist and merely served to perpetuate them”: p. 187). The paragraphs concerning the Judaeans and the Muslims provide a brief sketch of the philosophical history of these two peoples (among the Judaeans Philo and Maimonides are quoted, while for the Muslims there is a survey of the various schools in which fatalism expressed itself). As for Indian thought, Pluquet acknowledges that “philosophy is perhaps nowhere more ancient than in India”, but nevertheless believes it more appropriate to place this philosophy in the third epoch. This is due to the “revolutions” which took place in the religion and therefore in the philosophical doctrines of the country, which make any knowledge of the most distant time uncertain, and because of the cultural relationships established, on the one hand, with the Judaeans and the Arabs, and on the other, with the peoples of the Far East (pp. 209–210).

The fourth epoch extends from the fall of Constantinople to Bacon and corresponds to the Renaissance and the Reformation. It is characterized by the revival of the fatalistic doctrines of the ancients. Pluquet therefore presents the theories held by the modern followers of Aristotle (Pomponazzi, Cesalpino, Cardano, and Vanini), Pythagoras and Plato (Marsilio Ficino, Pico, Reuchlin, Francesco Giorgio Veneto, Julius Sperber, Boehme, and Walther), Zeno of Citium (Robert Fludd, who brought Zeno’s theories “into alliance” with the Mosaic account of Genesis: p. 273), Anaximander (Giordano Bruno), Diogenes of Apollonia (“Roderic”, i.e. the Portuguese physician Esteban Rodrigo de Castro, who taught at the University of Pisa and wrote *De meteoris microcosmi libri quatuor*, Florence, 1621), and Epicurus (whose principles were joined to the “system of the universal soul” by Nicholas Hill: p. 285).

To these theories should be added the “Fatalism brought on by the principles held by the allegedly Reformed Protestants”, which concludes the fourth epoch. This concerns those thinkers who came to deny the fundamental dogmas of Christianity on the basis of the Protestant principle which granted everybody the right to interpret Scripture freely (Michael Servetus, Geoffroy Vallée, and Matthias Knutzen).

The fifth and final epoch concerns the “progress of Fatalism from Bacon to the middle of the eighteenth century” and is presented in two periods. The first includes Hobbes, Spinoza and the Spinozists (Brédembourg, Leenhof, Hattem, and Wachter), while the second is devoted to the first half of the eighteenth century. Besides the concepts formulated by Toland, Collins, and La Mettrie, Pluquet presents some of the most significant works of the anonymous, clandestine literature which disseminated the most audacious theories produced by free thinkers in France: the *Traité de l'origine du monde et de son antiquité*, the *Réflexions sur l'existence de l'âme et sur l'existence de Dieu*, and the *Traité de la liberté*, which was attributed to Fontenelle (Note that another clandestine text, the *Lettre de Thrasibule à Leucippe*, attributed both to Fréret and d'Holbach, is mentioned in the conclusion, on p. 455).

**3.1.4.3** Tackling a complex phenomenon like “Fatalism”, which embraces the great questions of humanity (where does the world come from and what is the meaning of our lives and actions?) Pluquet sets himself the task of providing the reader with a general framework of interpretation, on which his confutation is then structured. This framework consists of placing the origin of all deterministic doctrines into two fundamental positions, an idea he had already outlined in the introduction and developed at length in the conclusion to the *Recherches sur l'origine et le progrès du Fatalisme*. “However little one reflects on it,” he remarks after summarily reviewing the development of deterministic theories, “one clearly sees that every man who claims that everything exists out of absolute necessity must necessarily presuppose that there is only one substance [of which – as he explains a few lines above – all particular beings are modifications], or that there are several substances which, by their action and combinations, necessarily form all beings” (*Examen du Fatalisme*, I, pp. 453–454). Besides this framework of reference and classification, we should point out a fundamental theory, analogous to that formerly maintained by Bayle and Deslandes, albeit with a different spirit: “All systems produced by the ancients presupposed principles or led to consequences opposite to the dogmas of the Christian religion” (p. 272; see *Models*, II, pp. 124 and 198).

Considering this radical disparity between pagan thought (firmly anchored to the principle *nihil ex nihilo*) and Christian revelation, it is hardly surprising that the error of Fatalism was born with philosophy itself. Once freed from the “eccentricities” and “prejudices” of poetic and popular cosmogony, albeit lacking the aid of revelation, early philosophers could only attempt to know the origin of the world “through observation”, which placed them before pre-existent matter. Thus confined and conditioned, “they could neither imagine a time in which nothing had existed, nor envisage an action capable of making that which is not exist. Driven to follow exclusively the evidence of their senses, they did not listen carefully to the inner voice of nature, nor did they join that chain of ideas which elevates reason to the

creative power and proves the need for a creator: hence they assumed that matter had always existed" (*Examen du Fatalisme*, I, p. 3). Driven by the "curiosity of the mind", the early philosophers tried to work their way back from the observation of effects to the "general principle of beings", which the Egyptians and the Brahmans identified with water; others, observing that the earth owed its fertility to the sun, were "naturally" induced to presuppose fire as a principle; the Gymnosophists and the Druids laid down two principles, matter and the universal soul, while the study of the regular motions of the stars gave rise to "astronomical Fatalism"... These were the "first seeds of Fatalism", originating in the East together with philosophy and then transmitted to the Greeks, who "surpassed their Masters" and inspired all later philosophers, thus giving rise to that sequence of deterministic systems which has come down to the present century (p. 14).

Moving now to the most significant judgements on the Greek philosophers, let us point out the emphasis Pluquet gives to the contrast between Socrates' deterministic scepticism and his ethical interiorism: "What kind of morals can be shaped by a philosopher who did not presuppose a design of the world nor a destination for man, and who believed that everything was subject to the dominion of necessity? Socrates thought he could find the principles of good ethics in the very heart of man", that is to say in the universal aspiration to happiness (pp. 31–32; as regards this evocation of interiority, let us note the author's remark concerning Epicurus' "power of declination", "which he did not explain very clearly as it was presupposed by inner sentiment and by the need for morals among human beings": p. 138). Pluquet emphasizes Plato's "natural inconstancy": driven by Socratic scepticism or by the fact that he viewed all systems as valid in some respects, he "subsequently adopted almost all the opinions formulated by philosophers concerning the origin and the nature of the world", thus oscillating between monism and pluralism, and this attitude of uncertainty also reappears in his morals (pp. 67–74). His disciple Aristotle was less inclined to doubt, but "nevertheless, he developed no stable sentiment on Providence: against the philosophers who had preceded him, he established the need for an intelligent and wise prime Mover, and adopted a system which excluded it", since the sublunary world was governed by chance (pp. 74–78).

Pluquet's preliminary claims of objectivity are confirmed by his balanced description of those philosophers traditionally considered to be furthest from Christian ethics, such as Aristippus, Hegesias, and Theodorus the Atheist. As regards Hegesias, Pluquet observes in a note that "it is not impossible for men who were not enlightened by the lights of faith to view death as good and suicide as a wise act". Like Bayle, he then pauses to relate a series of historical examples (pp. 40–41). As for Epicurus, Pluquet highlights his rigorously empirical approach to the study of the nature of the world, which – within a horizon lacking revelation – seems to be the most that human reason can reach. Epicurus was convinced that most philosophers to date had been wrong, since they had considered "as certain some facts which were false, or they had attributed too much generality to the phenomena observed". Hence, he "reckoned that, in order to avoid the obstacles on which their reason had stumbled, it was necessary, so to speak, to take soundings of nature, and to harbour steady principles, so as not to confuse appearance with reality.

But where can we find this rule which teaches us to distinguish what is true from what is specious? In the very principle of our knowledge, answered Epicurus, in our senses, by means of which we acquire all our ideas and without which we know nothing", even though "it is true that they do not enable us to know everything" (pp. 128–129). Further on, on the subject of Epicurus' moral principles, Pluquet remarks that "in denying Providence, Epicurus wished to teach men a beneficial truth, rather than slacken the reins of vice: he taught the gods' indifference to the actions of men and at the same time the necessity of virtue". The "fruit" of virtue is a "good conscience", namely, a "reasonable approval of oneself", in a "pure and enlightened state of conscience, having nothing to reproach itself with". This is not to be confused with "blind and groundless self-esteem" (pp. 135–137).

Following the traditional interpretation that originated with the Fathers, the reappearance of Fatalism in the early period of Christianity was due to the "intermingling" of the doctrines elaborated by the Greek philosophers with Christian truths. This led to a change in the dogmas of Providence, creation, and free will which had been taught and demonstrated by the new religion, because "when the mind is subjected to the authority of revelation it does not lose its curiosity, or that impatience that people used to reasoning have to shed light on everything they do not understand" (p. 155). An analogous process of contamination between philosophy and theology took place with Scholasticism, and it is explained by some interesting observations on the 'psychology of the intellectual': "The mind is ordinarily more impressed by the novelty than by the falsity of an opinion. The strangest sentiments lose their absurdity when we become used to considering them; and it frequently happens that they are reckoned to be less dangerous because we understand them and the understanding of them has cost some effort. The novelty of the doctrines annoyed our vanity; a knowledge of these doctrines reconciled them with it. The theologians, who were officially appointed to combat the opinions of philosophers, and hence to deal with them, became acquainted with these opinions, and therefore understood them. These opinions seemed less irritating; and since they formed part of their knowledge, and they owed this knowledge to their own effort, they viewed them as less contrary to religion" (pp. 179–180).

The philosophy of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, namely the fourth epoch, is presented as a momentous clash between the followers of Aristotle and those of Plato. The latter created a "new empire" which was in opposition to the authority of the formerly dominant Stagirite: an authority which in fact could not last forever, because "everything has its own epoch in the progress of the human mind, and the glory enjoyed by systems comes to an end which nothing can avert" (p. 141). Pluquet does not take sides in this clash but, in harmony with his principles, observes that it was more inspired by a partisan spirit than by a love of truth, and he establishes a parallel between the "revolutions in the Republic of Letters" and those that take place in states: "Public good is almost never the conspirators' aim, and the knowledge of truth is rarely the object of innovators. A passion is required to attack a dominant opinion, sanctioned by general reverence, and love of truth is rarely a passion. The interests of truth are almost always subordinated to the interests of a party. The Platonists and the Peripatetics made a much greater effort to defend themselves than to enlighten themselves or amend their sentiments" (pp. 243–244).

The result of this relentless battle was that Aristotle and Plato were no longer venerated as “infallible geniuses”. In the field of philosophy, the fall of these idols provoked “a sort of anarchy, which brought philosophers back to the condition in which they found themselves at the birth of philosophy”: not only Plato and Aristotle, therefore, but also other ancient thinkers had their followers and admirers. Yet, Pluquet makes it clear that this rebirth of the ancient schools was not totally lacking in innovation, and here he establishes a comparison with the order of nature: “The mind does not make any effort without enhancing its lights, and these lights are, with reference to the state of the human mind, the same as the moving force in the physical order of nature. An additional degree of motion would change the entire physical system of the world; new knowledge always leads to some slight change in the general views of the mind. Thus, the systems of the ancients were not adopted without reservations; modifications were applied to them” (pp. 244–245; however, as concerns the transition of several philosophers from Peripateticism to other ancient systems, see pp. 260–261, where it is observed that, as they were not “accustomed to doubt”, these philosophers were not capable of seeking truth by themselves: just like “children who make attempts at walking and who, after several staggering steps, seized the first handhold offered to them”, they adhered to the first philosophical system which did not appear to be too much in contrast with Christian dogmas, as Renaissance Peripateticism was).

The lengthy introduction to the fifth and final epoch (pp. 318–335) constitutes a systematic *discours* on the origin of modern thought, and links it to the “progress” of fatalistic doctrines. After mentioning the most outstanding opponents of Scholastic Peripateticism (Erasmus, the theologians Maldonat and Melchior Cano, and then Telesio, Vives, Patrizi, and Ramus), Pluquet sees the origin of this new thought in the overcoming of sectarianism and the establishment of the spirit of freedom, together with an awareness of the progressive nature of philosophical research. “A leader of a sect”, he observes, again taking an image from nature, “is like the centre or the hearth, the origin of the fire which warms the entire faction, and the enthusiasm he conveys becomes weaker as the distance in time and space grows. Hence, the enthusiasm and the drive that characterized Aristotle’s enemies and adorers weakened in such a way that, within a certain class of philosophers, a moderate degree of warmth, interest, and activity was produced which kept the mind equally distant from the inertia of the indifferent, the audacity of the factious, and the timidity of the slave, and brought about love for freedom and truth. The faults of the ancients were perceived without being blinded by their advantages. It became clear that the perfection of philosophy was neither the work of one day, one man, or one century; that it owed its advances to the efforts of the human mind no less than to chance and time; that nature and philosophy progressed similarly; that time developed knowledge and ideas, just as it brought about phenomena; that if we possessed some knowledge which the ancients had lacked, that was not the result of our superiority but of the epoch in which we lived; that freedom was therefore a fundamental law in the Republic of Letters” (pp. 320–321).

This “philosophical freedom” – which was claimed, for example, by the English anti-Aristotelian Nathanael Carpenter in his *Philosophia libera triplici exercitationum decade proposita* (Frankfurt, 1621) – is not to be confused with “that restless

and riotous freedom striving only for fame”, but consists of the “use of the right which all human beings have to analyse before believing, and not to subject oneself only to reason or to revelation”. These positions were also shared by Sébastien Basson, Nicolaus Taurellus, and Daniel Sennert (pp. 321–322). However, the reaction of the defenders of the “opinions sanctioned in the schools” was virulent, and around the year 1600 almost all men of thought “were wandering through the labyrinth of Peripateticism and – by means of abstractions, hidden qualities, and substantial forms – were shaping a multitude of chimerical systems which obscured the truth”. The few “privileged spirits” who were conscious of the pitiful state in which philosophy found itself dared not oppose Peripateticism directly or, driven by their fervour, developed “paradoxes” which were even more peculiar than those of the Scholastics (pp. 325–326). Yet, at the same time as these “new corruptions”, philosophical freedom “made the spirit of analysis more familiar”, and it was by virtue of this that Bacon was able to trace the principles underlying the mistakes made by the various philosophers, and grasp the radical inadequacy of their method. He thus elaborated a new method, on which he based “that extraordinary project which defines so accurately the limits and extent of the human mind and reduces the sciences and the fine arts to history, poetry, and philosophy”. At the basis of this great cultural project, which arouses Pluquet’s admiration, there is the methodical – and not the systematic, as was the case with the ancients – use of doubt, understood as “a preparation intended to make the mind capable of receiving the light of truth”, starting from the testimony of the senses (pp. 328–329).

Descartes himself took up Bacon’s concept of methodical doubt, making it even more general by applying it to the very impressions of the senses and, through the *cogito*, eventually arriving at the principle of evidence. In this case too, Pluquet does not side with either of the two great philosophers, but limits himself to pointing out the difference between their methods: “Bacon and Descartes thus opened up two completely different paths for philosophers: the path of observation ascending from facts to principles, and the path of abstraction descending from principles to facts”. But this progressive thread which had led to a valid way of philosophizing, from the early upholders of philosophical freedom to Bacon and Descartes, saw further developments, this time negative ones. While Bacon and Descartes had not extended doubt to the existence of a creator God and divine revelation, “Hobbes and Spinoza carried doubt up to these great truths. Once placed on this level of scepticism, these two philosophers examined the origin of the world and, following Bacon and Descartes’ method, formulated two quite different systems of fatalism which were much more general, regular, and seductive than all the systems we have previously seen” (pp. 332–333).

Pluquet observes that the particular success of Spinoza’s doctrines was due to his use of the geometric method, with which Descartes had swept aside that “sort of magical language” in which the Scholastics claimed to “speak or write about all subjects” and thus replaced the “order of ideas” with the “combination of words” (pp. 333–334). It is to be noted, however, that these negative results did not invalidate the effectiveness of the “reform of the sciences” initiated by Bacon and Descartes. Pluquet does not criticise these philosophers and only speaks of an “abuse” of their method by Hobbes and Spinoza, a theory he was to repeat in the

conclusion (pp. 452–453; for a conceptual analysis of the ‘transition’ from Descartes to Spinoza, see pp. 349–357).

But this was not the only abuse: after initial hostility caused by “ignorance” and “prejudice”, Bacon and Descartes’ method was universally disseminated, even among the theologians, and led to an extension of the “rights of reason”, which many judged to be “no less infallible than revelation”. Due in particular to Collins’ theories, there arose a “system of freedom of thought which subjected everything to analysis by the mind” and accepted only the rule of evidence. Pluquet distances himself from this orientation, although he does not criticize it as such; rather, he points out that its supporters (and Collins himself) “sometimes deceived themselves in their choice of principles [which are to be considered as clear and evident] or in the concatenation of the consequences, and became grounded on the rocks of Fatalism” (pp. 371–375). These are the roots of the final and most recent form of “progress” of the deterministic doctrines, which Pluquet illustrates in a precise and balanced summary, without criticising even the most audacious theories, such as that formulated by La Mettrie.

**3.1.4.4** The framework outlined so far clearly shows the wide scope of Pluquet’s treatment (somewhat similar to a general history of philosophy). But it also makes clear the particular approach adopted in it, which focuses attention on the speculative “principles” from which the deterministic mistakes variously developed. Biographical information is therefore systematically omitted; only in exceptional cases (Vallée, Knutzen, and Toland) does it appear in the footnotes. As for ancient authors, the “principles” are taken from first-hand sources or, if possible, from their own works, as in the case of Plato and Aristotle. As regards the medieval age (but note that Pluquet never uses the term *moyen âge*), he makes use of general treatments, such as de Launoy’s *De varia Aristotelis fortuna* or Du Pin’s *Bibliothèque des auteurs ecclésiastiques*. Eastern philosophies are likewise presented by following writers who were already well-established, like d’Herbelot, Basnage, Bernier, or Fréret. As for modern and contemporary thinkers, Pluquet refers directly to their works. His recourse to works on the history of philosophy is marginal: he mentions Thomasius’ *De exustione mundi Stoïca*, while he turns to Brucker for Marsilio Ficino and Jacob Boehme (pp. 262, 269, 271). The criteria of periodization change according to the different epochs: in the first, he limits himself to an overall treatment of the speculative genesis of Fatalism; in the second, as we have seen, the traditional subdivision into schools is associated with the need for a doctrinal classification; the third is structured by ‘nations’ or religious areas; in the fourth, he rigorously applies the framework of the schools, and in the fifth, the treatment is arranged author by author.

**3.1.5** In commenting Pluquet’s work, the major reviews of the time appreciated its historical perspective. In the *Année littéraire*, Fréron praised the order and the concatenation in which “all precious remains” of ancient philosophy had been assimilated (AL, 1757, II, pp. 246–247). The *Journal encyclopédique* provided a detailed and lively account of book 1, incorporating comparisons and considerations and evoking certain commonplaces of historiography and apologetics, in some contrast to the typically well-balanced style of *Abbé* Pluquet himself. As regards



Anaximander's theory, for example, the reviewer observes that "this habit of actualising one's own imagination in nature has constituted the philosophy of all ages, not excepting our own, in which we still see pure abstractions in place of reality in the mind of certain philosophers" (JE, 1757, VII/3, p. 13). As for Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Melissus, it is declared that "they paved the way for Spinoza", whereas it is from Pomponazzi that "modern deists have taken the arguments they use against miracles and prophecy" (JE, VII/3, p. 22; VIII/1, p. 34). The presentation of the third epoch offers an opportunity to radically criticize the opposition between philosophy and theology which was maintained by the "alleged strong spirits", and the attitude shown by the reviewer towards the new philosophy initiated by Bacon and Descartes seems to be more critical than Pluquet's (JE, VIII/1, pp. 18–21 and 41). As evidence of the rigour and honesty underlying the *Examen du Fatalisme* ("the work of an apologist", remarked Vernière, "but above all of an honest historian") let us remember that the work was appreciated in quite different milieus: the Italian Jansenist Paolo Del Mare, for example, mentions its account of the history of philosophy as an authoritative source (see below, Sect. 4.3.4.4), whereas Voltaire used it for a detailed analysis of Spinozism (Vernière, p. 444).

**3.1.6** On Pluquet's life, writings, and doctrinal positions: BUAM, XLV, pp. 5–9; Hurter, V, col. 452; DThC, XII/2, cols 2408–2409; Cioranescu, p. 1406; Vernière, pp. 440–445 and *passim*; Rétaud, p. 339; J. Rohbeck, 'Kritik der Aufklärung bei Bergier und Pluquet', in *Transactions of Ninth International Congress of the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 293–306; R.P. Coleman, 'The Enlightened Orthodoxy of the Abbé Pluquet', in *Histories of Heresy in the 17th and 18th Centuries: For, Against, and Beyond Persecution and Toleration*, ed. J. Chr. Laursen (New York, 2002), pp. 223–238; G. Schlüter, 'Exporting Heresiology: Translations and Revisions of Pluquet's *Dictionnaire des hérésies*', in *Heresy in Transition: Transforming Ideas of Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, I. Hunter, J. Chr. Laursen, and C.J. Nederman eds. (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 169–180; S. Ricci, *Dal "Brunus redivivus" al Bruno degli Italiani*, pp. 10–12; pp. 493–495; G. Barbini, *Il lusso. La civilizzazione in un dibattito del XVIII secolo* (Padua, 2009), pp. 493–495.

On the reception of his works: AL, 1757, II, pp. 240–257; MT, July–August 1757, pp. 1820–1864 and 2049–2087; 1762, II, pp. 2518–2541 and 2829–2832; 1763, I, pp. 56–96; JE, 1757, VII/3, pp. 3–24; VIII/1, pp. 18–43; VIII/2, pp. 23–44; JS, 1758, I, pp. 3–14.

## 3.2 Richard Girard de Bury (1730–1794)

### *Histoire abrégée des philosophes*

**3.2.1** Born in Pithiviers (between the Beauce and the Gâtinois) around 1730, Richard Girard de Bury went to Paris to become a lawyer, and practised his profession under the protection of Count Bernstorff, ambassador to the king of Denmark from 1744 to

1750 and later influential foreign minister of that kingdom. De Bury devoted himself to historiography and attained fame mainly due to the opposition of Voltaire and his circle. The year of his death appears to be 1794.

**3.2.2** Author of a vast but mediocre oeuvre, de Bury began his literary production with a polemic against Voltaire (*Lettre de M. de B\*\*\* à M. de Voltaire, au sujet de son 'Abrégé de l'histoire universelle'*, London, 1755); a few years later, the latter responded with the *Lettre civile et honnête à l'auteur malhonnête de la Critique de l'histoire universelle* [...] (Geneva, 1760). De Bury then wrote an *Essai sur la vie de Jules-César* (s.l., 1756), later reprinted under the title *Histoire de la vie de Jules-César, suivie d'une dissertation sur la liberté, où l'on montre l'avantage du gouvernement monarchique sur le républicain* (Paris, 1758); the *Lettre au sujet de la découverte de la conjuration contre le roi de Portugal* (Paris, 1759), in reply to which L.-A. Le Paige wrote *Réponse au Jésuite, auteur de la lettre au sujet de la découverte* [...] (Paris, 1759); the *Essai sur l'éducation d'un prince* (which appeared in the *Mercure* in October 1760, pp. 80–107); the *Histoire de Philippe et d'Alexandre le Grand* (Paris, 1760), and the *Eloge de Maximilien de Béthune, duc de Sully* (Paris, 1763).

He subsequently published a *Histoire de la vie de Henri IV, roi de France et de Navarre* (Paris, 1765), which provoked vigorous criticism from Voltaire (cf. *Le président de Thou justifié contre les accusations de M. de Buri* [...], Geneva, 1766), and also from La Beaumelle and Grimm. Even de Bury's later work, the *Histoire de la vie de Louis XIII*, which appeared in 1768, led to further sarcastic attacks. He attempted to reply with the *Lettre sur quelques ouvrages de M. de Voltaire* (Amsterdam, 1769), and the *Lettre sur les ouvrages philosophiques* [written by Voltaire] *condamnés par l'arrêt du Parlement du 18 août 1770* (The Hague and Paris, 1771). Subsequently, in addition to his *Histoire de Saint Louis, roi de France, avec un abrégé de l'histoire des croisades* (1775) and his *Essai historique et moral sur l'éducation française* (1777), de Bury wrote a *Histoire abrégée des philosophes et des femmes célèbres* (Paris: chez Monory, 1773), 2 duodecimo Vols, pp. xxiv–396 and 494.

**3.2.3** A historian of modest status, de Bury approached the history of philosophy with populist aims, driven by concerns of an educational rather than a philosophical nature. “The work I present to the Public”, his ‘Préface’ begins, “is not intended for those scholars who have spent their lives studying the sciences which lead to a knowledge of the truth. I offer it to the young who, just emerging from their early education, are not yet adequately educated to protect themselves against the snares set for them by the new philosophers. With their eloquent, pleasant, and seductive writing these philosophers apply themselves to destroying in the hearts and minds of the young those principles of religion and virtue which their earlier masters had sown in them. And since licence in sentiments leads to the corruption of morality, we have to make every effort to prevent the young from being seduced by the opinions that these philosophers circulate with such confidence” (*Histoire abrégée*, I, pp. ix–x).

De Bury does not intend to engage in doctrinal controversy because his project is not “to confute those opinions, but only to provide an abbreviated history of philosophers and philosophy, which, through an account of selected facts, will show that, from the beginning of the world, the knowledge of a supreme Deity directing and governing the entire universe has never died out in the heart of man”, despite all deviation and intermingling with false deities. Indeed, “there have always existed wise men who, guided by the hand of God, have taught men the path of virtue up to the advent of the Messiah”. This orientation – strictly historical and limited to “facts” – is justified by de Bury by reasons of a pedagogic nature. In relating the famous example of *Abbé Fleury’s Catéchisme historique*, he states that “the first education received by the young should start from a knowledge of facts because their intelligence is not completely developed and grasps interesting, true, and instructive facts with greater readiness and pleasure than it does serious reasoning, which requires reflection that the young are still unable to perform” (pp. X–XIII; but see also p. XX, and vol. II, p. 84, where it is pointed out that, among all the works produced by the human mind, history is the noblest and the worthiest of the *honnête homme*, as well as being the most useful for education and the most pleasant).

Following these preliminary remarks, de Bury observes that his *abrégé* will show the “mistakes” made by the most outstanding philosophers (such as Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle), but also the “wonderful lessons of virtue and highly purified morals” that they have handed down to us. Moreover, he makes it clear that he will also deal with “some of those eccentric philosophers who appear to have come into the world only in order to show what excesses the human mind can reach when it lets itself be guided by its feeble lights. These are thinkers like Epicurus, Zeno, Diogenes, and others, whose absurd and excessive feelings constitute the principles of materialism which the new philosophers would like to establish among us” (I, pp. XIV–XV). De Bury does not wish to go beyond these goals, and indeed he explicitly excludes the idea of turning his readers into philosophers. Embodying a feeling widespread in his age, he declares that “the knowledge philosophy can provide is rather useless to most men”. Indeed, of the four disciplines which make up this “science”, the most necessary and useful is moral philosophy. This reaches perfection in the Gospels, which are superior to all human philosophy. Logic, which helps us to distinguish what is true from what is false, is necessary to the ministers of religion, the counsellors of princes, and judges. Physics is useful to few people and must be reserved for those scholars who choose to “spend all their lives meditating on this science to reach new discoveries useful to humanity”, provided that they do not force their “imagination” beyond the scope of the knowledge granted by God. As for metaphysics (which is defined as “the science of purely intellectual things”), there are few people who can apply themselves to it. “I think”, concludes the author, “that it can be considered as the most abstract of the philosophical sciences, and we may easily leave it out” (I, pp. XVI–XIX).

### 3.2.4 *Histoire abrégée des philosophes*

**3.2.4.1** The *Histoire abrégée des philosophes et des femmes célèbres* comprises two distinct works with a common dedicatory epistle to Christian VII, king of Denmark (to whom the author is grateful for favours received) and a common 'Préface' (vol. I, pp. v–viii and ix–xxiv). The first work, *Histoire abrégée des philosophes*, takes up the entire volume I and pages 1–77 of volume II. After an introductory presentation without a title (I, pp. 1–60), it is divided into 67 unnumbered short chapters, each taking its title from the name of a philosopher, from Thales up to Spinoza. Volume I extends to later Scholasticism and includes the 'lives' of 40 philosophers, with the addition of five chapters devoted to general surveys ('Histoire de l'École philosophique d'Alexandrie'; 'Histoire de la philosophie sous l'Empereur Auguste'; 'De l'établissement de la religion chrétienne'; 'État de la philosophie sous les successeurs des douze premiers empereurs'). Volume II opens with a 'Histoire du renouvellement des sciences en Europe' (II, pp. 1–12) and contains the remaining 21 chapters, which are devoted to the same number of philosophers dating from the fifteenth up to the seventeenth century.

This is followed by the *Histoire abrégée des femmes célèbres, philosophes et savantes*, mainly derived from Plutarch and from the *Vies des dames illustres* by the Abbé Brantôme (†1614). (Regarding female philosophers, see Ménage's *Historia mulierum philosopharum*, in *Models*, II, pp. 74–78). In this work de Bury presents about 70 female figures, from the Jews Deborah and Semiramis to the most notorious female sovereigns of the modern age (Elizabeth of England, Mary Stuart, Christina of Sweden, Catherine of Russia, and finally Maria Theresia of Austria). Animated by an encomiastic (but hardly prophetic) spirit, de Bury concludes his work by glorifying the marriage between the Dauphin of France Louis Auguste (the future Louis XVI) and archduchess Marie Antoinette, the daughter of Maria Theresia, who is highly praised for her "wisdom" and "justice": "Quelle suite de prospérités ne devons-nous pas attendre de l'union des vertus de ces deux illustres époux . . . !" (II, p. 478). The two *Histoires* share the final index of names (II, pp. 480–494). As they are intended as populist *abrégés*, there is very little bibliographical information contained in the footnotes.

**3.2.4.2** Given its biographical nature, the *Histoire abrégée des philosophes* is not specifically concerned with periodization, and it uses the prevailing classifications. The treatment of more ancient thought is set out in the introductory chapter and comprises the Egyptians and the Hebrews, as well as the patriarchs. This is followed by the Greek philosophers from Thales to Zeno the Stoic, the Alexandrian school, Cicero, and philosophers of the imperial age, in that order. While presenting Thales and Pythagoras as the "two first founders of ancient philosophy, one in Greece and the other in Italy" (I, pp. 89–90), de Bury follows the traditional "sequence" of the two schools only partially, placing Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans after the Seven Wise Men and before Socrates, and dealing with Zeno the Stoic after the figures of Heraclitus, Democritus, Hippocrates, Pyrrho, Empedocles, and Epicurus, rather than after the Cynics (as required by the 'logic' of Laetius). A more strictly

chronological framework is adopted for the Middle Ages: in the West, “barbarism” lasted until the ninth century, when the Arabs brought about the “renewal of the sciences in Europe”, which started in Spain. Scholasticism, which is defined as “the last sect of philosophers of some reputation”, is subdivided into “ancient” (from Peter Lombard to Albert the Great), “middle” (from Albert to Durandus of Saint-Pourçain), and “new” (from Durandus to Biel), following the pattern of the Platonic Academy (I, p. 382). A new and more profound “renewal of the sciences” was produced by the “great revolution” of the fall of Byzantium, resulting in an influx of learned Greeks into Italy, where two parties emerged: the Platonists and the Aristotelians. From the period of Francis I, the “sciences” diffused throughout the kingdom of France, and here, during the following two centuries, they reached their zenith.

**3.2.4.3** Taking up a venerable and well-established theory, de Bury declares that “in order to know the origin of philosophy, or rather of human wisdom, it is necessary to go back to the creation of the world, because it was at that moment that God endowed the first man with the knowledge he needed to become the master of other creatures”. Adam was therefore “the first and greatest philosopher of the universe” (*Histoire abrégée*, I, pp. 4–5). After him, God created some wise men – Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses – so as to ensure the continuity of that “portion of wisdom He had conveyed to the first man” (I, p. 29). The Egyptian priests were the first philosophers after Noah. Besides many Greek philosophers and legislators, the Egyptians also instructed Moses, whose greatness in the field of speculation is here exalted. Resting on the harmony between natural and revealed religion, de Bury stresses that the rules of the Ten Commandments “agree with natural law: there is no religion in the world that preaches the opposite; and whenever nations have departed from them, they fell into disorder – hence the wars which have devastated the earth. But even if we consider Moses as a simple philosopher and then we compare him with those who came after him and examine his books with an unprejudiced heart, seeking truth in good faith, then we have to admit that he is infinitely greater than all the others, that he alone knew the true essence of the Deity and the perfection of morals” (I, pp. 33–35).

After dealing with the history of the Hebrew people (Solomon is defined as “one of the greatest philosophers of all times”, while the Levites were “rather useful and honourable kinds of philosophers”: I, pp. 47 and 49), de Bury outlines an introduction to Greek philosophy. He dwells in particular on Homer, whom every philosophical school – from the Stoics to the Epicureans, the Platonists, and the Aristotelians – wished to identify as their founder. Even some Christian authors, he observes with disapproval, dared to draw a comparison between the *Iliad* and the Bible, claiming that Homer, with his polytheism, still had a unitary conception of the divine (I, pp. 54–55). Judged from the perspective of Christianity, Greek philosophy as a whole necessarily appears highly inadequate: these thinkers “were only able to offer questionable and uncertain opinions [. . .]. Whatever merit we may grant them, they were unable to make any decision on matters which were outside their scope, such as knowledge of the true God, the creation of the world, the birth of

mankind, the Flood, etc.”, matters absolutely requiring the divine revelation which had been reserved for the Hebrews alone (I, pp. 57–58, where de Bury quotes a passage from Theodoret of Cyrhus).

As regards the various philosophers considered, a prominent position is given to Pythagoras, who is depicted as the founder of all Greek philosophy. Indeed, he “had such an extraordinary genius for philosophy that all the other philosophers were honoured to adhere to his doctrines. Socrates and Plato said almost nothing of value which was not his; and if we take a closer look we see that something of Pythagoras’ spirit dominates the other sects as well” (I, p. 91; for another similar theory, by *Père Mourgues*, see *Models*, II, pp. 95–96). The chapter on Pythagoras also discloses de Bury’s intellectual position, which is clearly out of date. After presenting the three doctrines that he considers to be common to all Pythagoreans (matter is eternal; the sun is fixed and immobile at the centre of the universe; all planets are populated with inhabitants), he comments on them as follows: “since God did not judge it opportune to disclose the secrets of providence to us, I will consider these opinions as systems which are not physically proved; when I say ‘physically’ I mean possessing the most evident certainty. Without playing the philosopher and taking the book of Genesis as the rule of my belief, I will merely say that I think that it is the sun which revolves around the earth. Even at the present time there are philosophers who share this opinion. Following Genesis, God created the earth before the sun [ . . . ], hence I conclude that the sun [ . . . ] revolves around it. Perhaps, unafraid of falling into heresy, I might even maintain my belief that, since the earth is a more perfect being than the sun, it is the latter which must revolve around it. However, I am just advancing an opinion which has existed in the world ever since creation, and the contrary has been asserted only in recent times” (I, pp. 95–97; see also II, pp. 33–35).

In pointing out the qualities and the defects of the two major Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, de Bury appears much more benevolent than *Abbé Pelvert*, who was motivated by similar apologetic concerns (see below, Sect. 3.3.4.3). He particularly appreciates Plato’s morals, which rest on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, considered to derive from Abraham himself, subsequently transmitted to the Egyptians and then to Pythagoras, who presumably taught it to Socrates. Furthermore, Plato made this doctrine “the most important principle of pagan morals, so as to oblige men to be virtuous with the hope of reward and the fear of punishment” – and here de Bury radically diverges from Pelvert (I, pp. 145–146). Despite his traditionalistic positions, de Bury declares that he does not share the theory held by several Christian writers (and here he mentions Bessarion, Ficino, Pico, Steuco, and Mr. and Mrs Dacier), that Plato had foreseen the “mysteries of Christianity”. Even the traditional idea that Plato had known the writings of Moses is qualified here, by arguing that Plato only knew these works indirectly, through the “mixture” of Mosaic truths and “fables” which made up the “system of religion” of the Egyptians (I, pp. 149–153). Between Plato and Aristotle (and here we again find the theme of the *comparison* between the two supreme philosophers which had been developed in particular by *Père Rapin*: see *Models*, II, pp. 40–50) de Bury definitely favours the latter, on account of his greater completeness, the systematic nature of his work, and his extraordinary ability to “discern what is true from what is false” (I, p. 153).

In presenting Aristotle, who is the philosopher treated at greatest length (I, pp. 153–175), de Bury provides a lengthy biography which also includes the events surrounding the Lyceum (note that particular emphasis is placed on Strato, whose naturalism is viewed as the foundation of the theories formulated by the modern materialists, such as d'Holbach). Then the author moves on to the various parts of Aristotle's philosophy and expresses his judgement on each of them. Logic and morals are praised as well as physics, although de Bury recognizes that the Stagirite "also commits several mistakes" – which is inevitable, he hastens to add, given the vastness of the science of physics and the fact that it was Aristotle himself who invented it. But it is these mistakes which give us the opportunity to condemn the excesses incurred by philosophers with their claim to reveal the unknowable: "Yet I believe that we can reproach both ancient and modern philosophers: they have tried to penetrate secrets that providence has judged inappropriate to disclose to us; and this has made them prey to great nonsense. They have therefore shaped systems, all of them utterly false. It would have been desirable for these philosophers to have harboured on this matter the sentiments that a famous poet of our time ascribes to the savage Huron, in an ode concerning the abuse of reason," (I, pp. 170–171, where de Bury quotes a few lines from an ode written by Jean-Baptiste Rousseau [1670–1741], which contains the myth of the noble savage of America). As for Aristotle's metaphysics, it is simply omitted, in accordance with the approach stated in the 'Préface'. De Bury explicitly declares that he will say nothing about it because it is abstract and complex, and "we have no need of this science to prove to ourselves that there is a God: we believe it, we are persuaded of it, this must suffice us" (I, p. 171).

The apologetic, edifying, and pedagogic aims behind the *Histoire abrégée des philosophes* can also be seen in the treatment of the other ancient philosophers. "The early Christians spoke in this manner", observes de Bury after quoting Socrates' reply to those friends who urged him to think about his own defence. "With unwavering voice they unceasingly repeated to their persecutors: 'Are we murderers or perjurers or arsonists?'" (I, p. 105). Later on, in denouncing the "nonsense" of the Cynics' morals, he points out that it allowed people "to avoid all good manners and violate their most sensible use", while the theories concerning the arbitrary origin of laws and a merely outward obedience to them jeopardised the conduct of "good citizens" (I, pp. 129–130). De Bury also takes an exemplary lesson from Pyrrhonism, following that Christian scepticism which counted among its major supporters the great scholar Pierre-Daniel Huet: "This opinion is the most naïve admission we can make of the weakness of our mind and of the utter ignorance in which we find ourselves. Is there anything more suited to awakening a legitimate mistrust in our lights? And more capable of directing our eyes towards religion? Religion alone does not deceive us and cannot deceive anyone" (I, p. 193; as regards Huet, see *Models*, II, pp. 139–148).

The essentially ethical dimension to which philosophy is restricted can clearly be seen in the emphasis laid on Cicero, who "equalled – and perhaps even surpassed – the most distinguished Greek philosophers in morals" (*Histoire abrégée*, I, pp. 240). This, however, does not spare pagan philosophy from the traditionally negative judgement originating from the Fathers. De Bury presents the advent

of Christianity and the “beautiful philosophy” contained in the Gospel (“when Jesus Christ descended upon earth, mankind was not only immersed in the general corruption of morality which reigned, but also in the most disastrous straying from the right path. [...] There was an astounding variety of opinions concerning the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the nature of the supreme good. Philosophers ceaselessly contradicted themselves, and by dint of subtle and wily reasoning they did nothing but blur the clearest notions”: I, pp. 275–276). But Christianity is contrasted not only with the ancient philosophers, but also with the *nouveaux philosophes*, in particular Rousseau, and de Bury attempts to confute the statements in *Émile* in which Rousseau accuses Holy Scripture of containing “things that are incredible and repugnant to reason” (I, pp. 292–302).

The treatment of medieval thought is developed briefly (I, pp. 382–399) and its general structure clearly follows the pattern of Rapin’s *Réflexions sur la philosophie ancienne et moderne* (cf. *Models*, II, p. 35). When he comes to present each individual thinker, however, de Bury departs from this source: instead of pointing out those philosophers endowed with a “spirit of innovation” (Raymond Lull, Peter of Abano, Roger Bacon, . . .), as Rapin had done, de Bury focuses on Peter Lombard, Abelard, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Albert the Great, whom he declares “the brightest geniuses of their time” (I, pp. 386–399). Compared to the treatment of both the Middle Ages and the modern age, the section on the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century thinkers reviewed at the beginning of the second volume (pp. 13–35) is surprisingly long. It includes Francesco Filelfo, Ermolao Barbaro, Bessarion, Alessandro Piccolomini, Francesco Patrizi, Ficino, Pomponazzi, Nifo, Fracastoro, Jacopo Zabarella, Paracelsus, Cardano, and Copernicus, with the addition of Ptolemy as a point of comparison. The criterion adopted in this selection is made clear by the author himself: “In the first place, I will deal with some of those who have proved to be more reliable on account of the wisdom of their sentiments, and also with some of those who stand out for the mistakes they made” (this is the case of Pomponazzi, Paracelsus, Cardano, and even Jacopo Zabarella, who is considered to be “eccentric” because of his fanaticism for Aristotle: II, p. 27).

The treatment of more recent thinkers is on more nationalistic lines, being restricted to Galileo and the French (cardinal Richelieu, Gassendi, Descartes, and Buffon; Bacon and Newton are notably missing). After presenting François I as the “father and restorer of the arts”, de Bury observes that judicial astrology became so widespread in France that it constituted the only science to flourish at the time, and this situation lasted until the age of Richelieu. The presence of this politician among the philosophers is justified by the fact that “his philosophy was no sterile wisdom, confined to purely speculative works, but a wisdom which he used for the glory of his King, the prosperity of the State, and the happiness of peoples”. Moreover, he protected the sciences and the arts, thus preparing for the “marvels of the century of Louis XIV” (II, pp. 47–50; in his dedication to the king of Denmark, however, de Bury had already hinted at “that true philosophy that teaches kings to govern their states with the wisdom and justice which make their peoples happy”; similar traces of an enlightened despotism reappear in his praise of Maria Theresia of Austria: I, p. VI; II, p. 476). Gassendi and Descartes are described as “two philosophers who



brought great credit to the French nation". While acknowledging Gassendi's highly cultured and honest nature, de Bury accuses him of having "mistreated" Aristotle, and more particularly of having disregarded Aristotle's logic, which is "the most perfect work ever produced by a human mind" (II, pp. 52–53).

Among the modern philosophers, Descartes is treated at greatest length. De Bury praises his physics (constructed with greater "order" than that of Galileo and the English thinkers, and richer in new ideas than that of Gassendi), although he also cites the criticisms that had been made against it. He provides a brief summary of the *Meditations on First Philosophy* – which he appreciates for their profundity (II, pp. 57–60). But it is Buffon above all who is presented as a model of the modern philosopher scientist ("the convincing proof of the degree of perfection to which the French have brought the study and knowledge of physics"). In his *Histoire naturelle*, Buffon "does not try, as the ancients had, to penetrate those secrets which God wished to keep from us. He does not invent any systems. He teaches us nothing but the sentiments fostered by reasonable philosophers as well as that which he has discovered through his deep meditation and through the experiments he has conducted thanks to his astonishing activity" (II, pp. 64–66).

Besides these luminaries, the depiction of modern thought also contains some disquieting shadows. The "renewal of the sciences in Europe" has also had "very dangerous effects": the diffusion of atheists and materialists, "men who make their dissoluteness the price of their unbelief. Since they have neither morality nor sentiments, they expect nothing from a rewarder of virtues and fear nothing from an avenger of crimes. These are the sentiments which the author of the *Système de la Nature* [d'Holbach] has so shamelessly passed off in recent times and which he has taken from the works of the atheists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. My purpose here", states de Bury, showing himself to be aware of his own limitations, "is not to confute the system of the atheists; [...] I only wish to speak about two men who tried to establish this sect and, regrettably, perhaps succeeded far too well: they are Vanini and Spinoza" (II, pp. 67–68). De Bury then takes up the theory held by anti-libertine apologists which viewed the Italian Renaissance philosophers as the first masters of atheism. Following *Père Mersenne*, he provides a brief biography of Vanini, "the first to make an overt profession of atheism", and mentions that the *De admirandis Naturae, Reginae Deaeque mortalium, arcanis* is the primary source of the *Système de la Nature* (II, pp. 69–72). As for Spinoza, de Bury merely provides a biography and formulates some general considerations: Spinoza is accused of being immensely proud (for striving to make his name immortal) and at the same time of ignorance, for having neglected to study non-atheist philosophers, and for not having reflected enough on the Scriptures. How can "a little philosopher", asks de Bury, concerned about the authority of tradition, "claim, after 5,700 years [since the Creation] to destroy knowledge [namely, the existence of God] imprinted in the hearts of all men and acknowledged by the wisest of the pagan philosophers?" (II, pp. 74–77).

**3.2.4.4** The *Histoire abrégée des philosophes* is modelled on the traditional framework of the 'lives' and is enriched by contributions from seventeenth-

century *historia philosophica* (de Bury repeatedly borrows from Rapin's *Réflexions*, for example – although he never explicitly quotes – especially concerning the philosophical 'genius' of the major nations of Europe: cf. *Histoire abrégée*, II, pp. 61–62, and *Models*, II, p. 36, note 12). His taste for historical narration manifests itself in lengthy digressions on the civilization of the Egyptians, ancient Greece, suicide among the Romans (but see the *Istoria critica e filosofica del suicidio ragionato* [1761] by Buonafede: below, Sect. 6.1.2), the life of Julian the Apostate, and the civilization of the Arabs... Indeed, de Bury imbues his work with an essentially populist historical character, which deprives it of any philosophical substance. "I will say nothing of the sentiments of this philosopher", he tells his readers after describing Plato's life, for example, "and I will not quote any passages from his works; I am neither enlightened nor learned enough to do this. I will only speak about him historically, with a particular view to reporting those facts which may provide a better knowledge of this philosopher" (I, p. 143). This does not mean, however, that his repeated claim to stick to the "facts" does not conceal a certain polemic against the 'philosophical' attitude to writing history disseminated by Voltaire.

**3.2.5** De Bury's history of philosophers was positively reviewed in the *Mémoires de Trévoux* and the *Journal encyclopédique*, which recognized its effectiveness as an antidote to the "detrimental curiosity of the mind which has given rise to modern materialists.[...] As a whole, we can only applaud the views held by Mr de Bury; they come from a *citoyen* [i.e. from someone respectful of the laws and working for the good of the Country], a wise man, and a Christian": (JE, 1773, II/I, p. 413). The *Histoire abrégée des philosophes* is a work of compilation, easy to read and unpretentious, occasionally enlivened by a few apologetic and polemical remarks and by its 'French' approach. It deserves to be remembered merely as a document intended for popularization, reflecting the commonplaces and fears of a culture more directly linked to the *ancien régime*.

**3.2.6** On de Bury's life and works: BUAM, VIII, p. 395; DBF, VII, cols 708–709; Cioranescu, pp. 426–427.

On the reception of his work: MT, 1773, I, pp. 561–563; JE, 1773, II/1, pp. 402–413 (on *Histoire abrégée des philosophes*); III/3, pp. 48–51 (on *Histoire abrégée des femmes célèbres, philosophes et savantes*); GE, 1774, I, pp. 65–71.

### **3.3 Bon-François Rivière (Abbé Pelvert) (1714–1781)** *Exposition succincte et comparaison de la doctrine des anciens et des nouveaux philosophes*

**3.3.1** Bon-François Rivière, known as *Abbé Pelvert*, was born in Rouen in 1714. He was an 'appellant' theologian, as those Jansenists were called who 'appealed' to a forthcoming council, against the bull *Unigenitus*. After undertaking his early

studies with the Jesuits in Rouen, he went to the Sorbonne and joined a community of clerics which had been set up in the parish of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois. The Jansenist bishop Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (the nephew of the great Bossuet) called him to the diocese of Troyes, where he was ordained priest and taught theology at the Major Seminary. He was removed from this position by Bossuet's successor, bishop Matthieu Poncet de la Rivière (1742). Back in Paris, *Abbé Pelvert* was prevented from exercising his ecclesiastical office for not having subscribed to the 'formulary', and he devoted himself to literary production. He died on 19th January, 1781.

**3.3.2** Only a few works from Pelvert's vast œuvre, entirely devoted to religious themes, were published, and those anonymously: the *Dissertations théologiques et canoniques sur l'approbation nécessaire pour administrer le sacrement de pénitence* (Avignon, 1755), (which was also attributed to G.-N. Maultrot); the *Dénonciation de la doctrine des ci-devant soi-disant jésuites, aux archevêques et évêques* (Paris, 1767); the *Lettres d'un théologien sur la distinction de religion naturelle et de religion révélée* (Paris, 1769–1770) (five 'letters', the fourth of which concerns the *Examen approfondi des difficultés de M. Rousseau de Genève contre le christianisme catholique* (Paris, 1769), by *Abbé Maleville*, who had some affinity with Jansenist positions and the author of a *Histoire critique de l'éclectisme*, on which see above, Introd., a); the *Lettres d'un théologien à M\*\*\*, où l'on examine la doctrine de quelques écrivains modernes contre les incrédules* (s.l., 1776), aimed at four ex-Jesuits accused of serious theological errors; the *Dissertation sur la nature et l'essence du sacrifice de la Messe* (Paris, 1779), aimed at François Plowden's work, the *Traité du sacrifice de Jésus-Christ* (Paris, 1778), which puts forward the theory of "sacrifice as an oblation" instead of "sacrifice as immolation". Pelvert's *Dissertation* gave rise to controversy: among the 14 works written in opposition to it, let us note the *Observations et aveux sur les opinions et les démarches de l'auteur des cartons touchant le sacrifice* by *Père Bernard Lambert* (s.l., 1779). Pelvert also wrote a *Défense de la Dissertation sur la nature et l'essence du sacrifice de la Messe* (s.l., 1781), published posthumously, in which he responded to the criticisms formulated by his opponents. A few years after Pelvert's death, the *Exposition succincte et comparaison de la doctrine des anciens et des nouveaux philosophes* (Paris: chez Méquignon, 1687 [sic, in fact 1787]), 2 duodecimo vols (pp. 623 and 686) came out, this too anonymously. The first of these volumes contains a broad general history of philosophy.

**3.3.3** Pelvert died before completing his *Exposition*, which indeed lacks a preface and has quite a short introduction considering the great length of the work. Nevertheless, the overall design of this *exposition-comparaison*, and more particularly the grounds for the author's recourse to the history of philosophy, are clear. Pelvert was motivated by deeply apologetic religious concerns, which are developed here in a historical rather than a merely doctrinal perspective. In opposing the deistic and materialistic doctrines of the *philosophes*, *Abbé Pelvert* expressed a need to go beyond a contemporary perspective and critically retrace the entire development of human thought, from its remote origins up to the eighteenth century. Within this great apologetic framework, the history of philosophy has a fundamental

and practical role. Indeed, the historical reconstruction is developed with a view to a “comparison” between ancient and modern philosophers and hinges on the conviction that “present-day unbelievers, who boast the title of philosophers, do nothing but revive the absurd opinions held by these false savants of Antiquity, even adding new mistakes which the ancient philosophers were far from maintaining” (*Exposition*, I, p. 532). The narrative and subsequent comparison between past and present philosophers thus constitute the terms of reference for confuting – in the form of *réflexions* – the mistakes made by contemporary *philosophes* and for demonstrating the possibility and the need for supernatural revelation, which “shows men the brightest lights [as opposed to false *lumières*] concerning all the subjects that these philosophers, both ancient and modern, have covered with the thickest darkness” (I, p. 543).

Abbé Pelvert therefore saw the history of philosophy through the eyes of a theologian, a Jansenist theologian, and showed a fundamental mistrust of philosophers on the whole, revealing an agreement with thinkers such as Arnauld, Nicole, Malebranche, and Descartes’ metaphysics. Hence, on the one hand, he is careful to emphasise the limits of human reason, and here we can note a quotation from the *Art de penser* and the interesting comments he makes after demonstrating the how motion is possible, against Zeno of Elea.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, he strictly focuses on issues related to the truths of faith. There is consequently a clear definition of the field of enquiry: in the introductory pages, Pelvert states first of all that “we do not claim to examine here all the systems created by the ancient philosophers in depth. Going into detail would be a huge and not very useful task. Moreover, their sentiments contain such variations, and even such blatant contradictions and incongruities, that in most cases it would be impossible to reconcile not only one with another but even each of them with itself” (I, p. 1).

But these observations, tinged with historical Pyrrhonism (he cites here, among other things, the opposing positions held by the Abbé d’Olivet and the marquis d’Argens, see above, Sect. 2.1.2), then give way to a more positive attitude, followed by a list of themes which make up the framework in which the various philosophers are examined: “But it would be wrong to conclude that it is not possible even to know the foundation of their systems as concerns several essential points of philosophy. If they are obscure and contradictory in many places in their works, then in other places they express themselves with clarity. The object we are pursuing, to compare their doctrines with those of present-day unbelievers, compels us to

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<sup>3</sup>*Exposition*, I, p. 65: “The fact that there are difficulties, possibly insoluble, concerning motion, as well as a multitude of other objects of nature, merely shows the limits of our mind and, instead of reasoning so much about things we do not understand, we should stick to experience. As for all these difficulties, we can repeat what Mr Nicole observes on the subject of the divisibility of matter *ad infinitum*: ‘The usefulness of these speculations does not only consist in acquiring the information, which is rather sterile in itself, but also in coming to know the limits of our mind and inducing it to admit, despite itself, that there are things which exist even though it is unable to understand them’” (cf. A. Arnauld, P. Nicole, *La logique ou l’art de penser*, introd. L. Marin, Paris, 1970, part IV, Ch. 1, p. 366).

limit ourselves: (1) To that which they have thought, in their Metaphysics, about the nature of God and that of man; and, in their Physics, about the constitutive principles of the universe; (2) To the principles of their Morals and the consequences they have derived from these principles or that necessarily derive from them. We will omit all that which concerns Logic as well as the questions pertaining to Physics which bear no relation to Religion. We will only quote some passages [concerning these subjects] incidentally, thus demonstrating how most of these ancient philosophers were very weak logicians and terrible physicists” (I, p. 2).

### 3.3.4 *Exposition succincte et comparaison de la doctrine des anciens et des nouveaux philosophes*

**3.3.4.1** The treatment of the history of philosophy takes up pages 3–543 of volume I and comprises 40 of the 45 “articles” into which the whole *Exposition* is divided. After article 1, which serves as a general introduction (‘Plan qu’on se propose dans cet ouvrage’, I, pp. 1–3), there is a short preface to ancient philosophy (art. 2: ‘Antiquité des philosophes’, pp. 3–4). Articles 3–5 are devoted to Eastern philosophies (3: ‘Dualisme. C’est le premier et le plus ancien système philosophique’; 4: ‘Exposition du système du Dualisme chez les Caldéens, les Mèdes et les Perses’; 5: ‘Zoroastre, réformateur du Magisme chez les Perses’, pp. 8–21). There follows a treatment of Greek philosophy up to the time of Epicurus (articles 6–28, pp. 21–209), which is critically re-examined in a later article especially devoted to it (29: ‘Réflexions générales sur la doctrine des philosophes que l’on vient d’exposer’, pp. 209–241). The subsequent articles, 30–41, are divided as follows: 30: ‘État de la philosophie depuis la fin du cinquième siècle des Olympiades jusqu’au règne d’Auguste’ (pp. 241–252); 31: ‘École d’Alexandrie. État de la philosophie à Rome’ (pp. 253–261); 32: ‘Secte Éclectique’ (pp. 261–266); 33: ‘État de la philosophie chez les Juifs, les Chinois, les Japonais, les Indiens etc.’ (pp. 262–279); 34: ‘État de la philosophie chez les Grecs et les Romains, dans les trois premiers siècles de l’Ère chrétienne’ (pp. 280–344); 35: ‘Vicissitudes de faveurs et de disgrâces que les anciens philosophes ont éprouvées dans les trois premiers siècles de l’Ère chrétienne’ (pp. 345–351); 36: ‘État de la philosophie pendant les quatre, cinq, six et septième siècles de l’Ère chrétienne, et sa décadence’ (pp. 351–363); 37: ‘État de la philosophie depuis le septième siècle de l’Ère chrétienne jusqu’au douzième’ (pp. 363–371); 38: ‘Vicissitudes de bonne et de mauvaise fortune qu’ont éprouvées les écrits et la philosophie d’Aristote, depuis le douzième siècle jusqu’au dix-septième’ (pp. 371–385); 39: ‘Décadence de l’autorité et de la philosophie d’Aristote dans le dix-septième siècle. Vraie méthode de traiter cette science’ (pp. 385–405); 40: ‘Nouveaux philosophes incrédules et impies, qui ont renouvelé les faux systèmes, et même enchéri sur les erreurs et les absurdités des anciens’ (pp. 404–532); 41: ‘Comparaison de la doctrine des anciens philosophes avec celle des philosophes modernes’ (pp. 532–543). With article 42 Pelvert begins his *réflexions* on the

modern Pyrrhonians, atheists, deists, and “theists”. This is continued in volume II, which is largely occupied by the 45th and final article (‘Réflexions sur le système des Théistes’, vol. II, pp. 154–686), where Pelvert develops an apology for Christianity. The longest articles are subdivided into sections with titles, which in the section on the history of philosophy generally correspond to the profiles of the individual authors or schools. Both volumes have a final table of contents. The text also has footnotes containing bibliographical information.

**3.3.4.2** The table of contents clearly shows the chronological divisions which Pelvert followed. Within this framework, let us note the absence of the traditional opposition between the Middle Ages and the ‘rebirth of letters’ which was normally placed at the beginning of the modern age. Indeed, Pelvert incorporates the Renaissance into the history of Aristotelianism by extending the framework formerly outlined by de Launoy regarding the reception of Aristotle at the University of Paris (see *Models*, II, p. 15) to the entire development of philosophy from the twelfth to the seventeenth century. But Pelvert superimposes this method of division – which is based on historical and cultural events – onto a clearly structured periodization (characterized not only by chronological periods but also by well-defined doctrinal positions), reflecting his apologetic approach to the history of thought. This periodization, simplified and essential, emerges in the considerations with which article 40 begins. Leaving out the most distant age, that of the patriarchs, the general history of philosophy can thus be divided into five long periods, which appear to alternate in their intrinsically positive or negative nature, and at a particularly fast rate in the last three centuries.

“Ancient philosophers”, the pagans, were unable to free themselves of error because they lacked revelation. Christianity dispersed the “thick darkness of both idolatry and ancient philosophy” (*Exposition*, I, p. 280), but then there was a ‘relapse’ brought about by Arab Scholastic Peripateticism, which lasted until the seventeenth century. Philosophy was thus delivered from Aristotelian errors, but this act of renewal and purification was opposed by the great “impious” Spinoza, who is presented as the father of the eighteenth-century *philosophes* (pp. 404–405). The *philosophes* themselves are grouped into four “new philosophical schools” which repeated the ancient errors, in a sort of historical recurrence which threatens an “almost general apostasy” and a consequent reversion to the worst form of paganism. Here Pelvert is referring to the “modern Pyrrhonians”, the “pure Materialists or Atheists” (Diderot, Helvétius, the author of *Militaire Philosophe* . . .), the “Deists” (Voltaire and Alexander Pope, who in his *Essay on Man* [1733] had put Bolingbroke’s deistic doctrines into verse), and the “Theists” like Rousseau, who – unlike the “Deists” – do not limit themselves to admitting a God who imparted motion to matter, but also recognise providence, the immortality of the soul, natural law, and reward in the afterlife, while rejecting any supernatural revelation and all the mysteries of Christianity (I, p. 432).

**3.3.4.3** There are two fundamental themes in the *Exposition*: the irredeemable difference between the ancient philosophies and Christianity, and the doctrinal kinship between old and new philosophers, past and present ‘errants’. Within this

framework, *Abbé* Pelvert carries out an extensive and meticulous job of historiographical reconstruction and doctrinal examination. He takes his lead from the traditional theory that “at all times and in all places there have been philosophers or wise men” and that the most ancient philosophers were, “in a sense”, the patriarchs of the Old Testament, who faithfully preserved knowledge of the true God and other fundamental truths. Briefly mentioning the philosophers of the Eastern and Northern nations, as well as those of Peru, Pelvert observes that, “it was however above all the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Persians, and Greeks who surpassed all the others in philosophical knowledge and applied themselves to it with greater care and perseverance, and whose thoughts are more clearly known to us” (*Exposition*, I, pp. 3–4).

The theme of the origin of philosophy, understood as a systematic set of doctrines (*système philosophique*) and not as the wisdom possessed by the biblical patriarchs, is approached by Pelvert with clarity and decisiveness: “the most ancient philosophical system known to us is that of Dualism, that is, of the two coeternal principles which are the causes of all the moral and physical good and evil which occurs in the world. This error is lost in the remotest times and clearly derives from the false ideas which had disfigured what ancient traditions had taught men regarding the Deity as the source of all good on one hand, and, on the other, regarding the devil who dragged our first parents into sin. There are traces of this system of Dualism in all nations, and almost all the religions of America are infected with it” (I, p. 5). This “system” was already present among the Chaldeans, the Medes, and the Persians, and was later restored (against the cult of idolatry) by Zoroaster, “the first philosopher of whom mention is made”, who is treated at length by Pelvert.<sup>4</sup> Soon cast into oblivion in Persia, Zoroaster’s “system” became widespread in the West (I, p. 21).

For Pelvert, metaphysical and moral dualism, considered as a doctrine claiming to explain the origin of the world and of evil, becomes a true historiographical category with which to interpret a large part of ancient thought, according to a tradition dating back to Plutarch’s *De Iside et Osiride*. This line of interpretation had already appeared among Protestant historiographers like J. Thomasius (see *Models*, I, pp. 422–423 and 430) and it now re-circulated due in particular to the infamous and controversial article on the Manichaeans which had appeared in Bayle’s *Dictionnaire*. If the Greeks of more ancient ages did not know Zoroaster’s doctrine (and indeed until Anaxagoras all Ionian philosophers were “pure materialists”), “it seems more likely that Anaxagoras took his knowledge of the true God from the

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<sup>4</sup>There was great interest in Zoroaster in this period (Voltaire, for example, see above, pp. 56–57). In the same year in which the *Exposition succincte* came out, the marquis de Pastoret, a fervent follower of Voltaire, published his work, *Zoroastre, Confucius et Mahomet, comparés comme sectaires, législateurs et moralistes, avec le tableau de leurs dogmes, de leurs lois et de leur morale* (Paris, 1787), on which cf. JE, 1787, II/3, pp. 427–444. Knowledge of this mythical thinker was provided in particular by the translation by Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (*Zend-Avesta, ouvrage de Zoroastre* (Paris, 1771); see Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, p. 139). For a list of eighteenth-century studies on Zoroaster, see Ernesti, pp. 166–169; see also Bonnerot, *La légende de Zoroastre* (see above, p. 80).

Persians by way of Pythagoras, who had acquired the same truth from Zoroaster, or rather through Hostanes”, the learned Persian who – as related by Pliny – had followed Xerxes during the expedition against Greece and whose teaching had been received by the Greeks with great interest (I, p. 37).

Following Porphyry, Pythagoras is presented as a pupil of Zoroaster, and Plato’s system is viewed as being very close to that of Pythagoras, so much so that the theories of the two philosophers are presented jointly. It is not surprising, therefore, that Pelvert defines the “characteristics of conformity” between Pythagoras-Plato and Zoroaster as astonishing (*extrêmement frappants*), although he does not fail to emphasize two essential differences. In the first place, for Pythagoras and Plato, the irrational soul is not totally perverted (as Ahriman was, on the other hand), but can be directed towards the good. Secondly, the Zoroastrian doctrine of the bodily as well as spiritual resurrection of man disagreed with the doctrine of metempsychosis invented by Pythagoras, or rather learnt from the Egyptians or the Indians. Yet, according to Pelvert, these changes introduced into Zoroaster’s system do not manage to eliminate the contradictions concerning the origin of evil (I, pp. 107–109).

Dualism is therefore presented as the most widespread speculative tendency among Greek thinkers, a sort of common denominator which makes it possible to unify different figures and schools. Indeed, at the beginning of article 29, Pelvert formulates the following general judgement on Greek philosophy: “[...] if we except the Ionian, Eleatic, Megarian, and Epicurean sects, and some other isolated philosophers, who were purely Materialist, and the Academics and Pyrrhonians, who doubted everything, the other sects recognized a supreme intelligence besides matter, an eternal, immutable, infinite God, who had shaped the Universe from the materials of chaos. And it was unanimously held that the soul of man is a portion of divine substance. This error arose from the fact that all of them admitted the impossibility of creation as an indisputable principle. As a consequence, there was no middle course: they either had to be Materialists or believe that our soul is an emanation of divine substance, at least as regards understanding and reason. Since divine substance cannot be the cause of moral evil – and since, owing to an additional error, they considered this evil as a real quality, necessarily having an efficient cause – some identified the origin of evil as an essentially bad and eternal substance, like the Ahriman of the Persians, while others identified it as the soul devoid of reason and lacking order, [composed] of a matter coeternal with God, as Pythagoras and Plato did; others, finally, assumed this doctrinal point without developing it, as Aristotle and Zeno did. This necessarily resulted in the false idea they formed regarding the supreme Being and the nature of our souls. It also resulted in the annihilation of human freedom and the reversal of the essential dogma of rewards and punishments after death” (I, pp. 209–210).

Having shaped a general approach to the question, Pelvert moves on to a detailed “analysis of what has been thought by philosophers regarding the dogma of punishments and rewards in the afterlife”, in order to lay bare the real convictions of these “false sages”. The ancients agreed in recognizing the “use” of the dogma of future retribution, because the threat of punishment makes the task of governing



easier and it is advantageous for the public good. But inwardly they did not believe the “truth” of this doctrine. In other words, they asserted a “double doctrine”, one public and official and another esoteric and intended only for the initiated. Such opinions were shared by Plato himself, even though he is usually considered to be “the keenest advocate of the dogma of a future state, undoubtedly because he was the first to apply himself to providing proof for the eternity of the soul”. In reality, observes Pelvert, he limited himself to “metaphysical arguments” about the permanence of the soul after death, but did not provide any real “moral proofs” for future retribution, merely offering reasons of use to society (I, pp. 225–226).

Moving on to Pelvert’s judgement of the individual philosophers and trends of thought, it is worth noting that they are never particularly benevolent. Pythagoras, for example, “was nothing more than a shrewd man and a politician, who took advantage of the credulity of the people in order to bind them to him and dominate them”. A closer study reveals that “he had neither conscience nor religion”; if he was not a magician then he was “a proper charlatan whose only aim was to build a vain reputation for himself” (I, pp. 50–51).

Not even Socrates escapes Pelvert’s severe criticism. Indifferent to the Socratic myth so widespread in the eighteenth century, he observes that the most beautiful moral maxims expressed by the Athenian philosopher are “spoilt” by his relativistic attitude: indeed, in proclaiming himself to be totally ignorant, Socrates limited himself to “enunciating his principles” and then “left them to be discussed by those who were listening. With these uncertainties he paved the way for Scepticism, just like almost all philosophers had done before him” (I, p. 84). Nor does Pelvert agree with the exaltation of Socrates by Christian writers, such as Erasmus. As for the image of Socrates as a Christian *ante litteram* he observes: “Either these writers thought that it is possible to be saved without believing in the Mediator, or some knowledge of the Mediator had been revealed to Socrates thanks to God’s special favour. The former idea would constitute a heresy even falsier and more dangerous than that of the Pelagians”, whereas the second hypothesis “is denied by history” and by Socrates’ own behaviour (I, pp. 86–87). There is an equally critical reaction to the Platonic theory of ideas, which is viewed as paving the way for scepticism because it admits a merely probable knowledge of things. No less critical is Pelvert’s account of Plato’s ethical doctrines, highly praised by the Fathers, but in fact inspired by considerations pertaining to “politics” (I, pp. 114–117).

The verdict on Aristotle is more nuanced. In an overall evaluation of his philosophical system, Pelvert states that the logic and physics are the “weakest” part, the rhetoric and poetics deserve admiration, and the metaphysics and morals, viewed together, put forward “good principles” but also “false and absurd, dangerous and impious maxims”. Pelvert then emphasizes the Stagirite’s “dogmatism”, that is to say, his conviction that there exists a science, in opposition to the “system of the Academics, the Pyrrhonians, and all the ancient philosophers who had paved the way for them” (I, pp. 150–151). The Aristotelian system is defined as “less complicated” than that of Plato; more specifically, Aristotle passed over the problem of the origin of evil in order to “avoid the main difficulty which had taxed his master so heavily”. Much space is then devoted to the question of the soul. After reviewing

various Aristotelian commentators, Pelvert denies that the Greek philosopher had maintained the doctrine of a universal soul, because the *nous* is a “portion of divine substance” which is reunited with its principle after death, while the passive intellect is destined to perish; but if this is the case, Pelvert immediately objects, “we cannot conceive how Aristotle might have spoken of free will” (I, p. 158).

Pelvert associates the system of the Stoics with the dualism of Pythagoras and Plato, but the former differ from the latter because they admit the existence of one supreme intelligence, devoid of emanations, namely, the soul of the world. All the deities worshipped in the various regions are considered to derive from it, as if they were mere attributes of the one and only God. Pelvert does not seem to discern the corporeal dimension of the God of the Stoics, and he even detects in their doctrines a rigorous dualism of matter and spirit which is contrary to any monistic perspective (“Spiritual substance can be clearly distinguished from material substance”: I, p. 173). Moreover, he points out the Stoics’ interest in logic; by means of its subtleties they compensated for “the lack of solidity in their doctrine and above all in their morals”, which Pelvert judges negatively. Hence, the ideal of the Stoic sage is defined as “eccentric” and “chimerical” (I, pp. 174–178). As for the wise and orderly life proposed by Epicurus, it is in fact disorderly because its object is “*amour propre* and the satisfaction of nature”; and here Pelvert confutes Bayle’s theory of the virtuous atheist, to which he was to return later when dealing with Spinoza (I, pp. 206–209 and 406).

Moving on to the Christian era, it is worth noting that the Church Fathers are excluded from Pelvert’s account, which only deals with those who created a “monstrous mixture” of Christianity and the mistakes of the Persians, Pythagoras and Plato (the Gnostics and Manichaeans), and those philosophers who had remained close to the ancient schools and were tenacious opponents of the word of Christ. Similarly, again on the basis of a clear distinction between Christian theology and philosophy, the only medieval writers who are treated separately are the Muslim Avicenna and Averroes, whereas the entire Scholastic movement is explained away in a few pages and, as we have already noted, following the work of de Launoy. Introduced into the Church by St John of Damascus and then transmitted to the Byzantines, the Arabs, and the Christians of the West, the Scholastic “taste” for Aristotle soon bore its “deadly fruits” in Amalric of Bène and David of Dinant (I, pp. 365 and 371–372). Pelvert recognizes that Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas applied “Aristotle’s principles and method” to Christian truths “without incurring his mistakes and impieties”. Nevertheless, his verdict on medieval Aristotelianism does not differ much from that of contemporary criticism: “on one hand, all these commentaries, both those written by the Arabs and those by the Christian doctors, made Aristotle’s doctrine more obscure, rather than clarifying it [...], since each of them made him say what they liked; on the other, this new subtle, abstract, meticulous method, which the ancient ecclesiastical authors never made use of, plunged philosophers and theologians into an obscure, intricate metaphysics, a multitude of questions which were useless, curious, and dangerous for the faith, and a horde of false and uncertain opinions which had never been heard of before in the Church” (I, pp. 372–373).

While judging it disgraceful that the ecclesiastical authorities eventually allowed and even ordered the study of Aristotle, Pelvert observes that even “the blindest partisans” of the Greek philosopher usually departed from his doctrines when they appeared to contrast overtly with Christian truths. However, this attitude was not shared by all, “because there always remained a number of vain and bold spirits who, in some way or another, committed his mistakes, and this is what should have led to him being thoroughly proscribed” (I, p. 375). In accordance with his fundamental interests, Pelvert dwells on the dispute between Pomponazzi and Nifo on the mortality of the soul. “These”, he deplores, “were the fruits produced by the study of Aristotle and the other philosophers of Antiquity”, and here he quotes the case of a certain Simone Romigleux who, during a public dispute in Toulouse in 1553, defended the erroneous doctrines of Epicurus, Plato, and Pythagoras. The rediscovery of the ancient philosophies is therefore judged negatively, and the condemnation of Aristotle also includes other Greek thinkers who had enjoyed great favour during the age of the Renaissance (I, pp. 379–380).

The theological concerns of the Jansenist Pelvert – in his polemic against the excessively conciliatory positions of the Jesuits – re-appear in his criticism of the theory of the salvation allegedly granted to Aristotle and other wise men of Antiquity. He defiantly proclaims that “this false doctrine, which is older than the Jesuits [and which he had just described as ‘worse than that of the Pelagians’], has been adopted and strongly defended by these fathers; however, against these novelties, there is a large number of excellent works which have proved that there is no true virtue without faith in Jesus Christ and that the ancient philosophers, like the other pagans, did not possess this faith, even implicitly” (p. 382). Analogous concerns underlie the paragraph on the Socinians, which concludes the article on the development of Scholastic Aristotelianism. The Socinians are mentioned for having denied the “creation properly termed”, like the ancient philosophers; and against the old and new supporters of this doctrine, Pelvert quotes a long extract from Malebranche’s *Méditations chrétiennes et métaphysiques* (I, pp. 383–385).

If the “mania” for Aristotle had started to diminish in the sixteenth century thanks to a few “more sensible and meditative” thinkers, it was in the following century that a general renewal took place in theology as well as in all realms of philosophy: “[...] but the cloud was totally dispersed in the seventeenth century, which abounded in lights and scholars of all kinds. Theologians, and especially those of Port-Royal, were far from considering this philosopher [Aristotle] as an authority, and judged him for what he was worth and completely removed him from their writings in order to follow the authority of the Holy Scriptures, the Councils, and the Doctors of the Church exclusively. The philosophers did not treat him any better: little by little they abandoned him and replaced his philosophy with a more solid Logic, not as burdened with useless questions, a Metaphysics infinitely more precise and clear, sounder Morals, founded on the purest principles of Christianity, and a surer Physics, based chiefly on experience and free from the multitude of imaginary hypotheses obstinately tackled in the previous centuries” (I, pp. 385–386).

The protagonists of this renewal were Galileo (“the first to dare to depart from Aristotle’s opinions”, defined together with Torricelli as “the father of modern physics”); Gassendi (who was himself the author of “a new way of philosophizing”, yet considered a “dangerous man” rather than a restorer of philosophy on account of his atomism and subsequent denial of the immortality of the soul); and Descartes, who was “the true restorer of philosophy”. Following Arnauld’s *Difficultés proposées à M. Steyaert* (1691), Descartes is described as a messenger of providence: “Mr Arnauld then shows that God allowed Descartes to appear in that period in order to undeceive those to whom these principles [namely, Gassendi’s theory that, on the basis of pure reason, it is not possible to prove that the soul is substantially distinguished from the body] would have been dangerous, establishing that soul and body, namely that which thinks and that which is extended, are two completely distinct substances”, and are hence irreducible to each other (I, p. 388). The positive view of Descartes’ methodical rules and metaphysical principles is mixed with some criticism of his physics and more particularly of the “hypotheses concerning the construction of the world”, based on the denial of vacuum and the theory of vortices. Pelvert observes here that it is not possible “to reconcile freedom of movement with the perfect exactitude of fullness”, namely with a matter entirely composed of hard particles; secondly, “as proved by experience, it is false that the movement of homogeneous matter alone can produce the particular natures of the different bodies the world is composed of, and it is above all in this that Descartes’ chief error consists”. Furthermore, it is precisely the same error, “as ancient as philosophy”, which lies at the basis of the alchemists’ belief in the possible transmutation of metals (I, p. 400).

The overall judgement on these “new philosophers”, the Cartesians, is that “if they have spoken with exactitude about God, the nature of the soul, and other questions, concerning both metaphysics and morals, they have erred greatly, on the other hand, as regards the construction of the world. This might have been avoided if they had kept to the account given by Moses in Genesis, which destroys their entire system, or if they had consulted experience rather than imaginary and ‘systematic’ ideas” (I, p. 402). Pelvert believes therefore that Scripture is in harmony with experimental science; the disagreement if any is caused by philosophy, when it claims to elaborate “systems” in order to explain nature. This is the case of Newton, whose restraint Pelvert appreciates, because he did not wish to know how the creation of the world had taken place but only how the world carries on and ‘functions’. However, the general principle of attraction is unable to explain specific phenomena such as magnetism, electricity, or fermentation. “Hence it clearly appears”, Pelvert observes, “that systematic physics is merely founded on conjectures and very uncertain opinions, which cannot be demonstrated. Only experimental physics can lead us to truth with certainty: only it is certain, useful, and in accordance with our state” (I, p. 404).

Pelvert has no doubts about the reasons which determined the advent of the “new unbelieving and impious philosophers”, from Spinoza onwards. He limits himself to a psychological and moral consideration: Spinoza’s celebrated virtue derived from the fact that “the strong passions in him were for the most part absorbed

by a stronger passion, which engaged him totally and which consisted of looking for all sorts of reasons and arguments to combat all religions, in particular that of the Judaeans, and establish a horrible atheism". He then takes up the apologetical historiographical commonplace of the ancient 'forerunners' of Spinoza's monism, and observes that "the foundation of this system is not new" since it was also present in the Ionian, Eleatic, and Cabalistic schools, in Epicurus, and in the Eastern schools. Spinoza, by contrast, distinguished himself by developing this system into an "organized doctrinal body, a pattern woven as if by a geometer" (I, pp. 406–408). After presenting a brief biography and the essential doctrines, Pelvert makes a long series of *réflexions* on Spinoza's "horrible" monistic and atheist "hypothesis", which also contain historical references, to Xenophanes in particular, and which constitute a reply to Bayle (I, pp. 408–431).

The *comparaison* between the doctrines of the ancient and modern philosophers constitutes the climax of Pelvert's analysis of the history of philosophy, and it is at this point that the author's fundamental theory is presented in detail. Indeed, he takes ten paragraphs to outline as many errors made by modern *philosophes*, which he compares in detail to analogous doctrinal positions held by one or more philosophies of Antiquity: Pyrrhonism, Spinozistic monism, the denial of the existence of God, the eternity of matter, the belief in fatality and destiny instead of providence, the denial of the spirituality of the soul, the mortality of the soul, the restriction of happiness to the earthly life, the denial of human freedom, and, finally, the assumption of immoral attitudes and rules such as *amour propre*, suicide, impudicity, concubinage, and the hypocrisy of "double truth" (I, pp. 532–536).

Paragraph 11, which follows, contains a summary of the second part of Pelvert's theory, namely that "the Deists and Atheist-Materialists have not only revived all these errors", but "have even added some greater ones, which most ancient philosophers did not fall into". He now turns the tables and highlights eight points on which the moderns diverge from the ancients from a doctrinal point of view: the latter denied the existence of God only exceptionally; they at least admitted (as Plato did) that the world is directed by a second intelligence and the intermediate gods, or (as Aristotle did) that the universe is governed by a general providence; most Greek thinkers recognized that the soul of man contains a "spiritual portion" which is immortal; although they departed from the right idea of human freedom, Pythagoras and Plato however "honoured" this principle, instead of objecting to it, as did "our Deists and Atheist-Materialists"; none of the philosophers of Antiquity "pushed eccentricity so far as to teach, as the new philosophers do, that in the beginning men lived like savages and beasts [...]. They never protested either against the union and the society of men [...] or against the establishment of political governments: quite on the contrary, they showed the great advantages offered by society as well as the need to live under a well-ordered government", and, they totally refrained from "reducing man to the condition of beasts". The Ancients based morals on a natural, eternal, and immutable law, and posited reason as a guide, while according to the moderns "that which is called virtue or vice is nothing other than a matter of convention, politics, or prejudice", and natural right is the mere product of our inclinations and desires.

Finally then, the balance weighs clearly in favour of the ancients. The wide gap, repeatedly stressed by Pelvert, between pagan philosophy and Christianity is now smaller, and a certain (more apologetic than historical) agreement also seems to emerge, thanks to the hypothesis of an influence exerted by Christian truths on contemporary pagan philosophers. “Finally”, Pelvert explains in the eighth and final point of this comparison, “if we read the works of the ancient philosophers we can easily see that they were looking for truth, and that if truth had revealed itself clearly to their minds they would have embraced it, at least in some essential points, thus avoiding many difficulties which made them commit an infinite number of errors. This can be seen in particular in numerous Platonists of the third and fourth centuries, who recognised the possibility and the reality of creation: this dogma had been made popular by the spread of the Gospel. This is equally observable in many Stoics and other philosophers – like Seneca, Epictetus, Plutarch, and Porphyry, etc. – who, having read our sacred books, started to teach an ethics which was purer and more exact than that of the ancients, who had no other light than that of their reason”. This partial change in Pelvert’s line of interpretation seems due to the tactical need to place greater negative emphasis on the attitude adopted by modern philosophers, who have been “educated in the principles of this holy, luminous religion but, far from adhering to the truth which manifests itself to their view in all its extent and clarity, they work only to stifle it and, insofar as they are able, replace it with gross errors clearly proven wrong by the facts, which most ancient philosophers, although immersed in darkness, had carefully avoided” (I, pp. 542–543).

**3.3.4.4** In the first part of the *Exposition succincte*, Pelvert’s apologetic intentions and his discussion of essential philosophical themes do not modify the structure of the *historia philosophica*. He maintains the subdivision into ‘sects’ (or schools) and extends it, with clearly negative overtones, to contemporary *philosophes*. Moreover, he takes care to provide a biographical profile of the philosophers examined, according to the model of the ‘lives’. But this traditional framework is pervaded by a highly critical tendency towards a system, the fruit of the author’s own apologetic intentions, but also an attitude which was widespread in the historiography of philosophy of the period. This tendency emerges above all through the use of dualism as a category of explanation and classification for most of the ancient thinkers, and through the predominance of this category over the demands of erudition. An indication of this is, for example, the way that Pelvert shifts the discussion of the origins of philosophy away from the traditional historical and geographical perspective (where and when did philosophy originate?) to the perspective of the ‘system’ (which philosophical system is the most ancient? – this is the implicit question answered in article 3).

Such a tendency can be perceived above all in Pelvert’s search for the fundamental theories of the ancient philosophers, which results in clear and orderly summaries, often arranged into numbered paragraphs. These summaries are intended for doctrinal criticism and appear to arise not so much from historical enquiry as from a sort of speculative *a priori* approach used to classify the various historical positions. “There can only be two ways of considering the soul”, observes Pelvert firmly, in

explaining why the ancients did not believe in retribution after death, “either as a quality or as a substance. Those philosophers, like Dichearchus, Epicurus, etc., who thought that the soul was nothing but a pure quality, believed and had to believe that it was annihilated at the moment of death. But most of them thought that the soul was a substance. Those maintaining this opinion have all unanimously held that the soul was nothing other than a separate part of a whole, that God was this whole and that the soul must eventually be reunited with him by way of re-fusion” (I, pp. 232–233).

In particular, Pelvert subjects the doctrines of the ancient philosophers to a thorough and systematic examination, revealing their fundamental inconsistencies. Some of these contradictions are merely apparent and can be solved using the criterion of the dual level of teaching, namely public and esoteric. Others involve the very foundations of the speculative constructions elaborated by the philosophers, and are motivated ‘logically’ by the fact that they failed to recognise the principles (such as creation and retribution in the afterlife) which constitute the basis of the Christian concept of God, the world, the soul, and moral life. Indeed, he reiterates his criticism of the *inconséquences* which the ancient philosophers fell prey to, as did their modern followers, aggravated by the fact that they refused the principles of truth offered by Christianity (see for example, on p. 154, the author’s remarks about the Aristotelian theories of God and the eternity of the world).

The sources used by Pelvert are listed in the opening pages. Among the ancients are Cicero, Plutarch, Diogenes Laertius, Aulus Gellius, Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria, Arnobius, Lactantius, and St Augustine; and among the moderns he mentions Vossius and “many other scholars who examined these matters more or less extensively” (I, p. 3). Among the latter, he names Lipsius, de Launoy, Gassendi, Fleury, and Thomassin in the course of his analysis, in addition to some articles from literary magazines. It is worth noting that Bayle, who is seldom named explicitly, occupies an important position both as a source and as a critical reference. Pelvert’s criticism of the “contradiction” incurred by Cicero when he ascribes a supreme intelligent principle to Thales (I, p. 26), for example, seems to have been inspired by the entries *Anaxagore* and *Thalès* from the *Dictionnaire*, which are, however, not mentioned. Pelvert is careful to point out that it is because of this contradiction that, in his *De civitate* (VIII, 2), St Augustine “takes no heed at all of Cicero’s testimony” (cf. P. Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (Amsterdam, 1740), I, p. 211, *rem. D*; IV, pp. 340–341, *rem. A and D*; for the views of other eighteenth-century writers on this question, see also *Models*, II, p. 162). While Deslandes and Brucker are never mentioned, Pelvert was probably aware of the overall judgements on ancient philosophy expressed by the former and the method of organization into “philosophemes” elaborated by the latter (see *Models*, II, pp. 197–199 and 536–541).

**3.3.5** Published on the eve of the Revolution, the *Exposition succincte* does not seem to have evoked much of a reaction in the literary journals of the period. As Vernière observed concerning anti-Spinoza apologetic literature, “there were several conscientious or able works which lacked something essential: a reading public” (Vernière, p. 430). The work’s status as a history of philosophy was acknowledged

by Tennemann, who noted it among the “various writings on the general history of philosophy”, and Degérando, whose judgement was rather negative, declaring that it “does not deserve to be rescued from the oblivion into which it seems to have sunk since its publication” (Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, p. 138). Cut off from the wider cultural circuit, the *Exposition succincte* must have been favourably received in the Jansenist circles in France and Italy, since Del Mare acknowledged that it prompted his “first impulse” towards historiography and that he had repeatedly made use of it (see below, Sect. 5.3.4.4).

Despite its lack of success, Pelvert’s treatment of the history of philosophy is not totally devoid of interest. Indeed, it shows that Pelvert had learnt the lessons of eighteenth-century ‘critical’ history, slanting this critical perspective, however, towards his own apologetic religious concerns. But he had also assimilated some of Bayle’s caustic criticism and clandestine erudition, which form the basis of the analysis, though they take on the opposite sense and value. The distinction between official and esoteric doctrine, the political use of pagan religion, the dualism of the ancient philosophers, the difference between Christianity and ancient philosophy, the Spinozism *ante Spinozam*, Pyrrhonism as a recurring theme, and the validity of the sharp Cartesian distinction between mind and matter, are all theories that Bayle had widely circulated throughout French and European culture, and which are now used within the framework of apologetic historiography. The line of interpretation which was widespread in the Catholic area between the sixteenth and the first half of the eighteenth century and which hinged on the fundamental ‘conformity’ between the major ancient philosophers and the Christian truths is now inverted (let us briefly recall, within France, Thomassin and Mourgues: see *Models*, II, pp. 61–63 and 95–96; but, for a comparison with Burigny’s attitude, see also pp. 159–162). The apologetic battle against the *philosophes* moves back to a position in which the impulses from libertine Enlightenment literature are mixed with the rigour of the Jansenist theologians and the tradition of Patristic polemic against pagan philosophies.

**3.3.6** On Pelvert’s life and works: BUAM, XLIII, pp. 171–172; DThC, XIII/2, cols 2746–2747; X, cols 1217–1221; XII, col. 2406; Cioranescu, p. 1372.

On the reception of his works: Tennemann. I, p. LXXXVII; P. M. Del Mare, *Quadro storico e critico delle opinioni filosofiche* (Genoa, 1793), I, p. XVI; Degérando<sup>1</sup>, I, p. 53; Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, pp. 138–139; Braun, p. 381. Pelvert’s work is not quoted in either Vernière or in Rétat.

On criticism: Piaia, ‘L’approccio storiografico a Spinoza nel Settecento francese: Ch. Batteux e l’ab. Pelvert’ (see above, Sect. 2.3.6), pp. 237–242.



**Part II**  
**The Historiography of Philosophy in Italy**  
**in the Second Half of the Eighteenth**  
**Century**

# Chapter 4

## The Enlightenment, Erudition and Religious Apologetics

Ilario Tolomio

### Introduction

#### (a) General considerations

At the turn of the eighteenth century, while a number of important works on the history of philosophy were being published in France and Germany, only short works of little significance were being produced in Italy on the subject (see *Models*, II, pp. 213–297). In the second half of the eighteenth century, it looked at first as if Italy wanted to make up for lost ground. Appiano Buonafede, the most important Italian historian of philosophy of the time, declared this intention in the preface to his *Istoria e indole di ogni filosofia*, in the hope that “Italy still has some historian of philosophy”, who can thus “raise [it] from its past sterility”. Indeed, Buonafede added here, “Italy has almost no philosophical historians. Luigi Pesaro, Lionardo Cozzando, Giambattista Capasso, Odoardo Corsini and Antonio Genovesi provided a few essays on this subject, but did not think of writing a full history, the sole exception being Capasso, who in mixing much erudition and much credulity, even writing that Pythagoras was a Carmelite and that the Druids had predicted the virgin birth, greatly diminished the dignity of trustworthy history and made us lose all interest in reading his tales” (*Della istoria*, 2nd Venetian edition (Venice, 1788), I, pp. XXXVII–XXXVIII). But it was not only Appiano Buonafede who was aware of this situation. Prefacing his *Quadro storico e critico delle opinioni filosofiche*, Paolo Marcello Del Mare surveyed the existing works on the historiography of history and among the Italians found only Agatopisto

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Cromaziano, the last in a long line of historians of philosophy. Before him were the Frenchmen Bayle and Deslandes, the Germans Buddeus and the “learned Brucker”, the Dutchman Voss, and the Englishman Stanley. Interestingly enough, in his *Storia della letteratura italiana*, which, among other things, also dealt with philosophy, Girolamo Tiraboschi ‘reversed’ the Italian sense of inferiority towards foreign culture and tried to demonstrate how Italy had always been ahead of other countries in sciences, letters, and all arts in all ages.

In practice, the Italian works on the historiography of philosophy in the latter half of the eighteenth century lagged behind other European countries and wanted to catch up. It was inevitable that within a cultural context of this sort, Italian literature on this subject did nothing but increase the success of Brucker’s work in Italy. All Italians writing on the history of philosophy had recourse to Brucker; nobody in this Catholic country was afraid to invoke a German Protestant. Even Appiano Buonafede himself, intransigent by nature and a declared anti-Protestant, used Brucker as a source, in a sort of love-hate relationship with the person who was, after all, providing him with the material for his own history of philosophy, showing distaste only for those ideas that were ill-suited to Roman Catholic orthodoxy. Everyone turned to Brucker: Juan Andrés, Antonio Meneghelli, Girolamo Tiraboschi, Cesare Baldinotti, and Lodovico Gemelli, the last of whom did not hesitate to scatter quotations from Brucker throughout his highly scholastic *Elementi di storia filosofica*.

Along with Brucker, another great German historiographer of philosophy was very popular, namely Johann Franz Buddeus. Buddeus was appreciated by the Italians above all for his theological interests, which aimed at defending rigid orthodoxy on a doctrinal level, while remaining sensitive to the need for inner renewal promoted by the German Pietist movement (see *Models*, II, pp. 343–373). Italians appreciated the religious fervour that was somehow reflected in the histories of philosophy (the histories of human wisdom), which were inevitably connected to the histories of theology (the histories of divine wisdom). Common religious interests made it easier for the Italians to feel more in tune with German culture mediated through the French, rather than with French culture itself, which had been severely compromised, to recall one of Joseph de Maistre’s concepts, by the revolutions of unbelievers and libertines that followed on from one another and culminated in the revolution of 1789.

However, by drawing inspiration so slavishly from Brucker, and by imitating him so faithfully, Italian historiography of philosophy in the second half of the eighteenth century was inevitably limited. Indeed, when Brucker’s work became known in Italy, German historiography of philosophy had already entered a new phase. Once enthusiasm had died out for the fabulous reconstructions of ancient “Barbarian” wisdom, from Adam to the last sages before the advent of the Greek philosophers, the historiography of philosophy turned to philological reconstruction of past philosophy and to the Greek origins of the history of philosophy. The publication of sources and texts of classical Greek and Latin antiquity recommenced after the interlude following the great Humanist revival. The lengthy syntheses of the history of philosophy no longer found favour if they were not supported by

reliable philological proof. Italian historiography, however, lacked this spirit, and still preferred to place the start of the history of philosophy in Adam and the Bible and follow the tortuous path of human wisdom through the Barbarian populations, in its various forms throughout the centuries, in order to arrive, finally, at the Greek philosophers.

The historiography of philosophy in late eighteenth-century Italy could certainly not be called 'doxographic', but was, rather, 'oleographic', or belatedly Arcadian. It still lacked a unitary sense and an organisation of the historical development of philosophy, and hence its critical or philosophical dimension often came to be eclipsed by the descriptive and narrative aspect of the philosophical events of the past. Moreover, historiography in Italy had not yet acquired an independence from other disciplines. The history of philosophy continued to be written within other 'histories', or together with them, in an attitude typical of the seventeenth-century polyhistorical outlook. In this sense, the work by Juan Andrés, *Dell'origine, de' progressi e dello stato attuale d'ogni letteratura* (Parma, 1782–1799) is a typical example, but equally typical are also the *Storia della letteratura italiana* (Modena, 1772–1781) by Girolamo Tiraboschi and the *Risorgimento d'Italia negli studi, nelle arti e ne' costumi dopo il Mille* (Bassano, 1775) by Saverio Bettinelli, which are all to be considered vast histories of culture.

This type of historiography was to prevail in Italy until the first decades of the nineteenth century. In his *Abbozzo di un quadro storico-filosofico* (Naples, 1810–1819), Francesco Berengher combined not only the histories of civilisation and philosophy but also religious history as taken from the Bible. And Count Gaetano Emanuele Bava of San Paolo (1737–1829), one of the writers of the Sampaolina 'academy' (the word itself comes from the count's name), in his lengthy and idiosyncratically organized *Prospetto storico-filosofico delle vicende e dei progressi delle scienze, arti e costumi dal secolo undecimo dell'era cristiana fino al secolo decimottavo* in five volumes (Turin, 1816), ended up by dealing with a little bit of everything, in a somewhat disorderly fashion: inventions, civil and ecclesiastic history, jurisprudence, "reasoning disciplines" (i.e. logic and dialectics, metaphysics, grammar and languages), medicine, physics, cosmology, natural history, astronomy, astrology, mathematics, geometry, economics, agriculture, commerce, mechanical and manufacturing arts, fine arts, figurative and plastic arts, ethics, and eloquence, not excluding, finally, a chapter on the "development of literature in general", almost as if in search of a unity that had been lost in the course of his confused narrative. It was undoubtedly Tiraboschi's model that led Italian historiography in this direction; a model, however, which had been superseded in the rest of Europe.

Giovanni Getto's definition of literary historiography in Italy in the second half of the eighteenth century was "cloistral", recalling Foscolo's derogatory sentiments in this regard (cf. *Dell'origine e dell'ufficio della letteratura*, in U. Foscolo, *Opere*, ed. F. Gavazzoni, II (Milan and Naples, 1981), p. 1320). The term is also applicable to contemporary historiography of philosophy, at least in so far as histories of philosophy were almost exclusively written by members of the ecclesiastical world at the time: Buonafede was a member of the Celestine Order, Soave of

the Somaschan Order, Andrés and Tiraboschi were Jesuits, Gerdil a Barnabite, Baldinotti an Olivetan Benedictine, Gemelli a Capuchin, Genovesi and Meneghelli abbots of the secular clergy.

It is thus possible to understand the apologetic intent that inspired almost all Italian historiography of philosophy. This intent, however, had not so much the shape of a defence of Roman Catholicism and its Church as a convinced affirmation of a sort of perennial Christianity (an idea that had already been held by some of the Fathers of the Church), that was born with the first man and was transmitted continuously throughout the centuries, a sort of latent Christian knowledge found in all those philosophers in history who knew how to recognize the existence of God, stated that the soul is both immortal and spiritual and that, finally, there is an afterlife.

In this it is possible to recognize the (at least unconscious) encounter between Catholic culture and Enlightenment Deism, the natural religion that the *philosophes* opposed to historical or revealed religions in an attempt not only to free themselves from the theological dogmas professed throughout the centuries in Churches, but also to rationalize man's inner aspirations. Yet there is something else. This Catholic historiography of philosophy agreed with many of the ideals that the Enlightenment world had been proposing for decades. From the decidedly hostile attitudes typical of a certain seventeenth-century Catholic culture, wholly preoccupied as it was with the Counter-Reformation, fairly conciliatory attitudes were reached by the end of the eighteenth century, in what could be defined as a sort of 'cultural irenicism'. It was not a true peace with what had been the culture of the libertines and was now the culture of the *philosophes*, but rather a tolerance of the spirit of the 'century', in the search for a new equilibrium that was not only social and political but also ethical and religious, in an acceptance of certain Enlightenment ideals that had by then been universally recognized.

All these Italian writers ended up by exalting the century of the Enlightenment, the century of philosophy, of science and nature, and the benefits it had brought for people's 'happiness' and 'liberation', preferring the Modern to the Ancient and, above all, to the Medieval. "And who", wrote Count Carlo Gastone Della Torre di Rezzonico from Parma (1742–1796), a follower of Condillac, in his *Ragionamento sulla filosofia del secolo XVIII*,<sup>1</sup> "from among lovers of knowledge, can refrain, when contemplating the rapid progress of the human spirit, from rejoicing at living amid such a clarity of teaching, such excellence in art, such a blossoming of invention?". Even if it was not "sophical in practice", the eighteenth century can be called "philosophical in theory" (pp. 4 and 7). Far removed by now from "the unlearned times", with the "tyranny of Aristotle and his shadowy followers" gone, "after ten centuries of universal ignorance", "it is a clear thing", Rezzonico

<sup>1</sup>The *Ragionamento*, "written in 1778" as it says in the *Opera omnia* (Como, 1815–1830), edited by Francesco Mocchetti, was also printed in the Milanese "Collezione de' Classici Italiani", vol. 352, in 1804. Here we refer to the new edition contained in *Raccolta di operette filosofiche e filologiche scritte nel secolo XVIII*, Vol. II (Milan, 1832), pp. 3–98.

continues, “that in our days human reason has finally rediscovered the way to rapidly reach truth [...]” (pp. 11, 12, and 17). Furthermore, “it establishes” “an incontrovertible truth by means of a luminous principle”, namely “that the happiness of the entire human race is the sole aim of true philosophy” (p. 66). And in the comparison between the Ancients and the Moderns we find a number of picturesque scenes, as the author imagines “seeing in the Elysium Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Cicero, besides the endless hordes of Greek Sophists, all hanging dourly on Condillac’s every word and admitting the source of their errors in an abuse of terms and analogy and in their admitting abstractions as if they were real things, and blush in turn when they hear the modern metaphysician settle their long and eloquent disputes, awarding none of them the crown” (p. 18).

The eighteenth-century tendency to “philosophicity” is reflected in every type of literary, scholarly, or scientific research. Thus it is no surprise to find a *Storia filosofica, e politica della navigazione, del commercio e delle colonie degli antichi nel Mar Nero* (Venice, 1788–1789, 2 tomes) by Vincenzo Antonio Formaleoni (1752–1797) from Piacenza, a sort of history not only of the conquest of the shores of the Black Sea and the commercial network between the ancient colonizers (to which the author also adds the medieval ones in the course of his narrative), but also of the civilisations to which these colonizers belonged. The Black Sea, seen as the stage for diverse civilisations and cultures, has thus witnessed the presence of peoples such as the Greeks, the greatest philosophers of antiquity, who “proud of their sciences” lacked nothing “except the spirit of moderation and harmony in order to be truly great and happy”. In fact, the author remarks, “the arts and sciences were perfected by this nation in a context of wealth and peace” (I, p. 199).<sup>2</sup> All study and research took on the characteristic of ‘philosophicity’. A companion of Juan Andrés, for example, the Castilian Jesuit Stefano Arteaga (1747–1799), who lived in Italy for many years, set himself the task in his *Rivoluzioni del teatro musicale italiano* (Bologna, 1783–1788, 3 Vols; repr. Sala Bolognese, 1969) of tracing a “philosophical history” of Italian musical theatre, thus illustrating neo-classical “good taste” as opposed to the seventeenth-century baroque fashion that had already been contested by Girolamo Tiraboschi in his *Storia della letteratura italiana*. It was precisely against this generalizing “philosophical” spirit that the anonymous author of a review in the *Efemeridi letterarie di Roma* wrote towards the end of the century. Reviewing the *Philosophical and Critical History of the Fine Arts, Painting, Sculpture and Architecture* by Robert Anthony Bromley, London 1793: “These *philosophical and critical histories* having become so fashionable after Raynal’s work, may be a good thing, and perhaps they are for certain spirits;

<sup>2</sup>For a comparison with Raynal’s *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissemens et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (Amsterdam, 1770), see above, Chap. 2, Introd., e. This famous work had aroused a heated debate in Italy, critical and polemical, above all in the Jansenist periodical AE (1781, pp. 225–228, 233–237, 246, 377–379; 1782, pp. 17–20, 21–22, 29–30; 1789, pp. 82–83; 1790, pp. 203–204; 1792, p. 8), but also in EL (1773, April, tome II/2, pp. 84–95), GER (1791, tome VI, pp. 9–11, 13–14, 190–191), NGLdI (1788, pp. 553–554), and MSSLC (1798, Semester II, Part I, pp. 46–53; 1800, Semester II, Part II, p. 109).

but really, let it be said for the sake of truth, that they are not histories, at least not according to the idea that this term presents us with when examined in twenty-four centuries of writers. Criticism and philosophism are obviously useful faculties; but when rendered analogous to history, they merely result in an amorphous mass of heterogeneous subjects, which does not allow the reader to learn either criticism, philosophy, or history" (ELR, 1795, t. XXIV, p. 55; the same review in GLE, 1794, t. XIII, July, pp. 8–13).

However, in these historians of philosophy and civilisation we find not only an exaltation of the philosophical century. They undoubtedly accept Locke's theory of knowledge, as taken up by Condillac. For the abbot from Treviso, Jacopo Pellizzari (1732–1817), for example, human knowledge depends entirely on the "complection of fibres" which make up cerebral tissue: "the fibres in the body are used by the thinking substance like handmaidens to form ideas of things, and to receive the corresponding impressions" (*Saggio d'un piano di educazione proposto alla gioventù italiana*, Venice, 1778, p. CXXIII). Moreover, in nearly all these authors epistemological sensationalism is accompanied by a condemnation of the Middle Ages, in their opinion afflicted by 'obscurantist' epistemological and metaphysical doctrines. The same Jacopo Pellizzari speaks of the "dark haze" which enveloped the Middle Ages. "Italian ears then had instilled in them", he writes, "the four elements, the crystal spheres, prime matter, the substantial forms, the eternity of the world, entelechy, eternal chaos, and such like, not products of reason, not principles, not seeds of truth, but dreams, novels, follies. Then, Nature abhorred a vacuum; then, bodies falling from above accelerated because of their size and weight; then, comets revolved under the moon; then all was sympathy and antipathy"; then

Cold waged war with heat, hard with soft,  
Humid with dry, and light with heavy (*Saggio*, pp. LXIX–LXXI).

This passage exhibits a historiographical opinion that was upheld by Italian historians of philosophy until the first decades of the nineteenth century. In 1811, the Venetian Count, Giovanni Triffon Novello (1737–1819), was still repeating judgments on the Middle Ages that clearly came from Brucker. "What was Scholastic metaphysics in fact?", he wondered in his essay dedicated to *Aristotelismo e Platonismo* and the *Effetti dannosi del loro impero* together with the *Benefizi della loro caduta*: "Abstract notions, mental punctiliousness, distorted imaginings, fallacious axioms, empty definitions, senseless terms, ridiculous questions, logomachies, quirks, logogriffs, dialectic foolishness, useless theurgic repetitions". And he continues by describing what he calls "the repulsiveness of this filth": "from there came the uproar, the opposing opinions, and the obscurities of the commentators on the *Sentences*, the authors of *Summae*, the Albertists, the Ockhamists, the Nominalists, the Realists, the Conceptualists, and the Formalists; hence the monstrous conflicts of haecceity, entity, and formality; hence the accidents, not modes but entities of entity, verbal, abstract and concrete predicable, and predicamental; hence the antiperistases, the quodlibetal questions, and the most terrible question of whether the forms of bodies are substantial, or essential, and all the other remaining sprouts from the scholastic dunghill – a wholly Bruckerian image – so fertile in chimaeras

and centaurs”: *Supplemento al Saggio sui principi e progressi della storia naturale considerata in tutte le sue diramazioni, ovvero quadro comparativo della filosofia antica e moderna* (Venice, 1811), VI, pp. 221–223.

The word ‘timid’ could be used to describe the defence of the Middle Ages attempted by Appiano Buonafede, who pointed out a “temperate” Scholasticism alongside an “intemperate” one. However, as we shall see, his opinion here was clearly intended in anti-Protestant, and particularly anti-Bruckerian terms, as an expression of Roman Catholicism. The defence put forward by Baldinotti is more convincing: following Leibniz, he advocated the “sound doctrine” of many Scholastics, whose linguistic and formal “barbaries” were, if anything, to be “emended”, not “despised”. Even more resolute was the ‘apologia’ published by Juan Bautista Gener, one of the many Spanish Jesuits who sought refuge in Italy when the Jesuit order was suppressed in their own country in 1767: *Scholastica vindicata, seu Dissertatio historico-chronologico-critico-apologetica pro theologia scholastica vel speculativa adversus obtrectatores* (Genoa, 1766). Nevertheless, the aim of the work was not a reappraisal of medieval philosophical thought; rather, it was an apology for the Scholastic tradition, and above all for late Spanish Scholasticism, considered by Gener as the authentic glory of the Society. For this reason, Gener can hardly be considered an eighteenth-century forerunner of the Neo-scholastic movement.<sup>3</sup> Finally, among the defences of the Scholastics, we can also quote the *Apologia de’ teologi scolastici* written towards the middle of the century by Pietro Giannone.<sup>4</sup> However, the aim and content of this work is not what one might expect: in fact, it attacks the Scholastics using libertine, Protestant, deistic and jurnaturalistic arguments, and it can be called an apology only insofar as all their errors are made to originate from the Fathers.

Enlightenment attitudes, cultural irenicism, acceptance of the spirit of the age, and a conformity in historiographical judgements (on the Middle Ages in particular) depended to a great extent on the fact that in the eighteenth century the Roman Church did not profess a philosophy of its own, as it would do in the following century, when it chose a blend of doctrines allegedly derived from Thomas Aquinas, and imposed them on Catholic clergy and thinkers. It is significant, for example, that a prefect of studies at the Padua seminary, an important institute with a theology faculty, should deliver an inaugural lecture entitled: *In philosophia nulla praecipue secta eligenda est* (“In philosophy no school is to be chosen above others”). After schematically outlining the historical course of wisdom and philosophy, and after reviewing the main philosophical schools (Pythagorean, Academic, Peripatetic, Epicurean, Stoic, Democritean, Scholastic and, lastly, the Moderns), Giuseppe

<sup>3</sup>Gener was the author of another similar work: the *Theologia dogmatico-scholastica, perpetuis prolusionibus polemicis historico-criticis, necnon sacrae antiquitatis monumentis illustrata* (Rome, 1767–1777, 6 tomes), which was greeted very favourably in Roman circles, as one can judge from the numerous reviews that appeared in ELR, 1772, I, p. 11; 1776, V, pp. 1–3, 9–10, 17–19, 25–27; 1778, VII, pp. 17–19.

<sup>4</sup>The work is available today in P. Giannone, *Opere*, S. Bertelli and G. Ricuperati eds. (Milan and Naples, 1971), pp. 789–911.



Rinaldi (1697–1755), the author of this dissertation,<sup>5</sup> revived the ancient image of the “industrious bees” that “finally make the sweetest honey by extracting the juice from many flowers” (p. 88). Young men who approach philosophy must enter it “free anyway from all prejudice”, and free also from the “tyrannical servitude” commanded by Scholastics to Peripatetic doctrines (p. 85). “Let them [the young] be fond of Aristotle, nonetheless, even if they are captivated by his admirable intelligence, they must not despise the Moderns (*juniores philosophos*). Let them be the friends of the Moderns, but guided by their disputations let them not forget the message of Aristotle. They should always bear in their eyes the truth, not as if it were entirely contained in the science of a sole man, but considering it – as Lactantius cleverly admonishes – as distributed among different philosophers and schools” (p. 89).

(b) *Exemplary “Histories”*

Almost all the historiography of philosophy in Italy of the second half of the eighteenth century was written in imitation of Brucker, with an apologetic, religious intent, and an Enlightenment inspiration. To these characteristics we must add learning and so-called ‘antiquarianism’. All of them are present in the work of the most important Italian historian of philosophy of the time, Appiano Buonafede. Yet Buonafede was accompanied by other writers who produced histories of philosophy which may be termed mainstream, engaged in cultural fields wider than that of scholastic or popular information.

If, for instance, Paolo Marcello Del Mare, a Catholic priest of convinced Jansenist belief, had completed his *Quadro storico e critico delle opinioni filosofiche* (Genoa, 1793; Pisa, 1795), he would not only have been able to contend with Buonafede for the glory of being the first great Italian historian of philosophy, but he probably would also have created a historiographical hermeneutic that was more spiritual and less polemical, in accordance with the interioristic principles of the Jansenist movement. For Del Mare, the history of philosophy is a history of opinions and not certainties, the latter only being possible through revelation and divine grace. Pagan antiquity is thus shrouded in pessimism and there is no room for salvation, which should be the final aim of human knowledge. The modern world is superior to the ancient precisely because it can attain from Christian revelation the salvation that was denied to the ancients, who fumbled in the darkness of the uncertainty that resulted precisely from the “opinions” that wise men and philosophers claimed to be the bearers of.

Del Mare’s work can be compared with some contemporary histories of theology, which were all not only predominantly inspired by religion, but were also engaged in a militant apologetic against unbelief and the anti-ecclesiastic spirit of the time, or even against the “deviations” from Catholic dogma arising from the Jansenist movement. Let us mention here the *De generis humani consensu in agnoscenda*

<sup>5</sup>The inaugural lecture was published in Josephus Rinaldi, *Orationes in Seminario Patavino* (Padua, 1746), pp. 73–89. Rinaldi’s *Orationes* were also reprinted in 1757 and 1758.

*divinitate opus metaphysicum, criticum et historicum* (Florence, 1773, 2 tomes) by the Roman Jesuit Luigi Brenna (1737–1812), where, according to an anonymous review published in the Pisan *Giornale de' letterati* (1773, XI, p. 200), many important questions concerning the critical history of philosophy are “resolved”. There was also the successful *Meditazione filosofica sull'Ateismo, e Pirronismo antico, e moderno proposta in un ragionamento* (Rome, 1776), which the Dominican Tommaso Vincenzo Falletti (1735–1816) – a pupil of Cardinal Gerdil – presented against unbelief by using the history of philosophy. Running along the same lines is the *Saggio storico critico sulla vanità e insufficienza dell'antica filosofia pagana paragonata colle massime, e co' precetti della morale cristiana* (Rome, 1777) by the Florentine Gaetano Sertor, a work which was translated into French and which enjoyed a measure of polemical success in the very land of the *philosophes* (cf. the reviews in AL, 1783, IV, pp. 145–179; JE, 1783, V, pp. 3–15; JE, 1792, III, p. 553). This work aimed to demonstrate how all the most famous men of antiquity, in taking *ratio* as their sole guide, did nothing but accumulate errors and doubts, while it is only in Christianity that men may find happiness. Thus even the wise pagans (Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Seneca and Epictetus, to mention the most important) all ended up by groping in the dark, and certain modern thinkers (in particular Spinoza and Bayle) were unable to make any further progress because, by choosing to discard Christian revelation, they fell into “vanity”, “absurdity” and “uncertainty”.

Another example of this type of apologetic literature closely linked to the history of philosophy is the academic dissertation by the Ferrarese Abbot, Antonio Pinazzo, *Della cognizione ch'ebbero le antiche genti e i pagani filosofi dell'esistenza in noi, e necessità di uno speciale divino soccorso a ben fare, da' dottori cristiani distinto poi col peculiare adattato nome di grazia* (Verona, 1797). The subject of the work is linked to Jansenist problematics, but it mainly aims to attack “the modern so-called philosophers”, who “deride as if an invention of Scholastic deception [...] the cognition that ancient nations and gentile philosophers had of inspiring Grace” (p. 4). It is, therefore, a kind of history of ancient philosophy viewed from the particular angle of the theology of grace, against the “insolent laughter” (p. 9) of unbelievers. Everyone, from Homer to Hesiod, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, from the Greeks to the Romans, is evoked in defence of the theory put forward at the outset.

Far removed from this type of problematic, which is characteristic of the second half of the eighteenth century in Italy, but not unconnected to the historiography of philosophy, is the older *Historia theologica* (Trento, 1742) published by Scipione Maffei (1675–1755) at the height of the anti-Jansenist struggle.<sup>6</sup> Through the

<sup>6</sup>The lengthy, descriptive title of Maffei's work itself gives us an idea of the content: *Istoria teologica delle dottrine e delle opinioni corse ne' cinque primi secoli della Chiesa in proposito della divina grazia, del libero arbitrio, e della predestinazione. Nella quale con particolare diligenza si raccolgono i sentimenti in queste materie di sant'Agostino, e per la quale vien' ad apparire quanto opposte alla cattolica tradizione sien le proposizioni dalla Bolla Unigenitus condannate, e quanto vane le difese in lor favore addotte* (= *Theological history of the doctrines*

thought of the Fathers of the Church and Augustine's immediate successors, not excluding contributions by medieval masters, Maffei set himself the task of clarifying Augustine's doctrine of grace, openly condemning the interpretations presented by the Port Royal movement. Along with Maffei's *Historia theologica*, we can quote another history of theology: the *Histoire de la théologie* written by a Carthusian monk, Bonaventura d'Argonne, which was published posthumously in Italy after his death at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and was initially translated into French and then into Italian (Lucca, 1785, 2 Vols; *Storia della teologia*, Fiesole, 1833, 2 Vols; Florence, 1847). A more extensive work than Maffei's, both in the time period covered and the range of problems considered, d'Argonne's history starts with the theology of the antediluvian patriarchs and ends in the eleventh century, dealing with Bernard of Clairvaux in particular, who is judged by d'Argonne to be the last of the Fathers of the Church. We can also quote here the *Storia ragionata delle eresie* (Verona, 1795) by the Veronese Canon Pietro Paletta (1741–1806): six lengthy tomes devoted to Christian thought in its deviations first from Apostolic, and then from Roman, orthodoxy. The memorialist Luigi Federici states, in his *Elogi istorici de' più illustri ecclesiastici veronesi* (Verona, 1819, III, p. 237), that Paletta “intended to give his work the title of *Critical-Philosophical History*” and stresses that, according to Paletta, “without philosophy there is no geometric reasoning, and without critique no justice, no truth of ideas”. Finally, following a judgement on Paletta by Juan Andrés, he states that this author “is not content to set out the facts, and explain the doctrine, but attempts to find their origin philosophically” (p. 238).

Without the ‘philosophicity’, but with no less a historiographical sensitivity, Bishop Alfonso Maria de' Liguori (1696–1787) had also published an *Istoria dell'eresie colle loro confutazioni* some years previously (Naples, 1772; Bassano, 1773) which consisted of three tomes (about a thousand pages in all). Animated as it was by the apologetic spirit so typical of this theologian and moralist of the eighteenth-century Italian Church, it was also not inaccurately entitled the *Trionfo della Chiesa*. The content moves through the centuries (Tome I: from Simon Magus to Hus. Tome II: from Luther to the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Heresies), with the “confutations” at the end of the historical treatment (Tome III). “Many writers”, he explains in the preface, “have written at length in several volumes on the history of heresies”; others have spoken about them in treatises devoted to the “universal history of the Church [...] according to the order in time in which a certain heresy appeared, made progress, or was felled”. Liguori, on the contrary,

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*and opinions that were held during the first five centuries of the Church concerning divine grace, free will, and predestination. in which, with particular diligence, the sentiments of St. Augustine are brought together on these subjects, and in which it appears how opposed to Catholic tradition are those propositions condemned by the bull Unigenitus, and how vain is the defence put forward in their favour).*

intends “to gather together briefly the beginnings and progress of all heresies, [...] uniting in the same place all the information belonging to each heresy” (ed. Bassano, 1773, I, pp. 8–9).

The apologetic intent reached its peak in the re-evocation of Scholasticism. One good example is the *Scholastica vindicata* by the Jesuit Juan Bautista Gener, quoted above. After briefly outlining the history of Scholastic theology from Anselm to the latest eighteenth-century developments (pp. 1–60), Gener moves on to the *encomia* devoted to it (pp. 61–91) and the confutations of its *obtrectatores* (pp. 92–137), without neglecting finally to describe the ‘academic geography’ of this theological and philosophical culture so typical of the Catholic Church (pp. 138–228), almost as if he wanted to demonstrate its vitality and continuity in the face of acrimonious Enlightenment culture.

By contrast, the lessons on the history of moral philosophy (from the ancient Oriental peoples to the Greeks) by another theologian, the Jansenist Pietro Tamburini (1739–1827), were animated by religious fervour rather than by apologetic intent. They were published in his *Introduzione allo studio della filosofia morale* (Pavia, 1797): this was a field that was highly congenial to the Port Royal brotherhood, allowing them to express their own ideas and inner convictions far better than in other areas, in strenuous defence of the objectivity of human and religious values against lax interpretations. In this, Tamburini carried on the thought of Jacopo Stellini, and was connected to his *De ortu et progressu morum, atque opinionum ad mores pertinentium specimen* (Venice, 1740), which was translated several times in the second half of the eighteenth century and is a vivid testimony to the veiled presence of Vico in these writers.

The most famous work defending the theistic, religious, and generally spiritualistic principles in late-eighteenth-century Italy, however, was the *Storia critica delle opinioni filosofiche di ogni secolo intorno all'anima, alla cosmologia, a Dio e al naturale diritto* by the Cassinese Benedictine monk Basilio Terzi (1734–1813). Published in Padua in the last quarter of the century, it was received very favourably not only in Italy but also abroad, especially in Germany, where it received more reviews than Appiano Buonafede's *Istoria e indole di ogni filosofia*.<sup>7</sup> Divided into four parts, as the title implies, only the first two were completed: that on the soul (*Storia critica delle opinioni filosofiche di ogni secolo intorno all'anima* (Padua, 1776–1778), 8 tomes) and that on cosmology (*Storia critica delle opinioni filosofiche di ogni secolo intorno alla cosmologia*, Padua, 1788, 4 tomes). In all, it comprises a set of 12 tomes devoted to what can be defined as the ‘philosophical creed’ of Roman Catholic Italy. It has been said that the only ‘historical’ thing about this work is its title (Motzo Dentice d'Accadia, p. 88). Indeed, it is neither a true history nor a history of problematics and themes. The work progresses, rather, by addressing accepted or confuted theories with no chronological order or historical sensitivity, on the basis of the mere argumentative strength of one or other philosophical standpoint, whether it be ancient or modern. Thus, for

<sup>7</sup>In Italy, Terzi's work was reviewed in GE, 1777, IX, p. 59 and in NGE, 1788, LX, pp. 45–46.

example, the part concerning cosmology starts out with the “opinion, by which it has been absurdly claimed that the world, as we see it, has always existed, and came into existence by itself, or at least as far as its substance is concerned” (*Storia critica* [...] *intorno alla cosmologia*, I, p. 2). “Let Bayle speak first”, the author begins; and presenting Bayle’s thought, taken mostly from a few entries in the *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, Terzi also adopts the path through the history of philosophy taken by Bayle himself. This is followed by criticism, sometimes less than convincing, sometimes subtle, but always apologetic. After Bayle come the opinions of other ancient and modern philosophers with no regard for chronological order (Malebranche, Riccati, Storchenau, Boscovich, Cudworth, Mosheim, Moniglia, Aristotle, Pereyra, Genovesi, Valsecchi), always accompanied by Terzi’s own criticisms, corrections, observations and judgements. His theory (the orthodox one, that the world was created in time by God) thus gradually comes to eclipse the other erroneous opinions. In short, “listening to the opponents” consists merely of confuting them with the aid of “orthodox” writers and, obviously, arguments inspired by Christian revelation and the teachings of the Church. After exhausting the subject in no less than 150 pages, he concludes with the exultation of the apologist: “Now let us see whether our adversaries can shout victory”.

Juan Andrés and Girolamo Tiraboschi, authors of ‘literary histories’ in the broad cultural sense, are the best known examples of a form of the historiography of philosophy that was not fully autonomous as a discipline but still part of a wider cultural context. These famous histories of culture can be linked to others that show an interest in all disciplines, including philosophy. In the first place, we have the *Discorso sopra le vicende della letteratura* (Turin, 1761 [but 1760])<sup>8</sup> by the Piedmont Abbot Carlo Denina (1731–1813), a polygraph, historian, and man of letters. The very title of his work, “the vicissitudes of literature”, hints at the tendency among the scholars of the century to stress the rise and fall of civilizations, the periods of splendour and obscurity, from which they derived such classifications as the “golden centuries” or the “barbarous centuries”, “declines”, “rebirths” or “restorations”, which were so common in the historiography of the age. One might be led to believe that a universal history of literature such as that by Denina would include philosophical literature, as was the custom; but this was not the case. Denina restricted the field of literary historiography mainly to that of *belles-lettres*, stating that the history of philosophy and the sciences entered into his plan “only indirectly”. “I will not reason on this class of authors”, he wrote in the ‘Dedication to the King of Prussia’ (his protector), in the premise to the *Vicende della letteratura*, “unless it is to indicate better those periods that were generably favourable to studies and rich in great men, or to observe how the cultivation of the sciences at times retarded that of the Fine Arts, and at some other times prevented the decline and corruption of the latter; or, finally, to point out some topics that they

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<sup>8</sup>There were several editions of the work. Here we quote from the 1788 Venice edition, tome 2. In 1792 a new enlarged edition was published and in 1811 the *Saggio storico-critico sopra le ultime vicende della letteratura* came out, which appears as book 4 of 1792 edition.

dispensed to works of good taste” (p. XIII). Denina is decidedly in favour of the ancients, despite living in the age of Enlightenment, and in his review of ancient and modern philosophers and philosophical systems, he underplays the innovative importance of the latter and goes back to the roots of ancient wisdom as the basis for modern thought.

We must also add to the group of works devoted to ‘literary’ historiography the *Risorgimento d’Italia negli studi, nelle arti e ne’ costumi dopo il Mille* (Bassano, 1775) by the Jesuite Saverio Bettinelli,<sup>9</sup> a work that also included the history of philosophy in Italy. Progressing through the centuries, as Tiraboschi had done, the work concerns above all the historiography of philosophy in its negative judgements on medieval philosophers, especially the Scholastics. Even the Jesuit Bettinelli, therefore, repeats the typical Enlightenment accusations against the Scholastics, criticizing in particular the authors belonging to the “second generation” of Scholastics, namely, the generation from Aquinas to Duns Scotus. His judgement is exemplary. “They therefore continued to read and comment in the schools on the four books of the *Sentences* and among them various opinions arose. Since these opinions concerned points of religion predominating in every heart, hence a great fervour of dispute was born, every topic was treated in the manner of the *quaestio*. This is a term which should have meant research and examination, but (after those great contrasts) it came to signify dispute, contention, and scholastic combat, and theology was also called scholastic because it was born and grew up in the schools. Now, among these interpreters of the books of the *Sentences* the most ardent in religion were the men called, in order to distinguish them from other authors, the religious, and first of all among these at the time were the Dominicans and the Franciscans, who were the most numerous and the most highly considered. From them arose the two famous schools of the Thomists and the Scotists, which then persevered for so many centuries and were so called because one of the schools arose from Thomas and the other from Scotus, who of all the interpreters of Lombard were the most famous among the two parties of Scholastics. [. . .]. It is true that not all theologians followed either St. Thomas or Scotus faithfully, but in wishing to add something to them and abusing their wise method, they brought their disputing fury to capricious questions, to bizarre and useless subtleties, ignoring the Holy Fathers, ecclesiastical history and even the Holy Scriptures in order to sophisticate in their own way with new opinions and systems, to a great extent along the lines of Arab philosophy or Aristotle, who became increasingly authoritative even in these subjects. Therefore, it is no wonder that this second era, and the third no less, is held to be ruinous for theology and licentious, because it is full of equivocal, punctilious, and fallacious Arab taste, resting, that is to say, on whim and not on the foundations of venerable Christian antiquity” (pp. 212–213).

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<sup>9</sup>Bettinelli’s *Il Risorgimento d’Italia* was a successful work: it later appeared in the editions of Bettinelli’s *Opera omnia* of 1780–1782, 1799–1801, and 1819–1820, and as a single work in 1786. A recent edition is used here, ed. by S. Rossi (Ravenna, 1976).

The early nineteenth century saw other Italians continue this type of eighteenth-century 'literary' historiography. It is sufficient to consider Giambattista Corniani, from Brescia (1742–1813), and his very successful *Secoli della letteratura italiana dopo il suo risorgimento* (Brescia, 1804–1813),<sup>10</sup> which testifies to the continued preference for a cultural, polyhistorical and encyclopedic historiography rather than a specific historiography devoted to individual disciplines. Thus in Corniani's work one finds numerous elements of philosophical history, concerning not only Italian authors, but the philosophical history of the whole of the Western world, starting from the patristic age, and in particular the encounter between philosophy and Christian theology in the Alexandrian *milieu*. It moves on through the "labyrinth of infinite questions, and encumbered and erroneous opinions" typical of Scholastic philosophy, basically centred on the problem of universals (cf. I, pp. 34–41), to come to the philosophers of early Humanism and the later Renaissance, and finally to the modern philosophers, who take up a large part of the work because of the novelty of their teaching, particularly that concerning the philosophy of nature.

This custom of embracing several disciplines within a cultural historiography was to disappear only after the first decades of the nineteenth century. The successful *Storia della letteratura italiana dall'origine della lingua sino a' nostri giorni* (Milan, 1834<sup>2</sup>, 4 vols) by abbot Giuseppe Maffei is typical of this approach. Despite the declared subject of this work, Maffei cannot give up the idea of outlining, albeit summarily, the course of human knowledge, which he sees as beginning in Greece and coming to completion in Italy, which has "the honourable title of mother of sciences and letters, nurse of highly fruitful minds and jealous custodian of the sacred fire of philosophy and the fine arts". Modern Italy can counter "your Aristotle, your Theophrastus, your Seneca and your Pliny", with Redi, Galileo, Magalotti and Zanotti in particular (I, pp. 1–2).

More widespread than the apologetic or 'literary' way of writing the history of philosophy was the method proper to the erudite scholars and the polygraphs of the time, who no longer favoured large general historical and philosophical synopses. Rather, they aimed to rediscover an ancient people in a renewed cultural vision, attempting to give an overall meaning to the great amount of information that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scholarship had gradually been assembling in a rather confused manner. A typical example of this way of writing historiography is the *Saggio storico-critico sopra la filosofia della Grecia e del Lazio* (Venice, 1806) by abbot Antonio Meneghelli (1765–1844), who was professor at the University of Padua for many years. This is a work devoted to the history of Greek and Roman philosophy, but also open to the judgements and future prospects of philosophy through the centuries, and hence it can be considered as a kind of general history of philosophy. Meneghelli's *Saggio* arose from his love of classicism, and was

<sup>10</sup>This work, in 9 Vols, was reprinted again in Brescia in 1818–1819, in Milan in 1832–1834, and in Turin in 1854–1856. The Turin edition, used here, is in 8 Vols, "with additions by Camillo Ugoni and Stefano Ticozzi" and with a continuation "up to these last days by Francesco Predari".



influenced in particular by *Liceo*, the work by the Frenchman La Harpe (see above, Chap. 3, Intro.) which he had been translating at that time.

Along with Meneghelli's history of Greek and Roman philosophy, it is also worth mentioning another work by abbot Denina, the *Istoria politica, e letteraria della Grecia* (Turin, 1781), which also offers elements of the history of Greek philosophy from the origins to Aristotle. Still linked to this Italian cultural climate, although written later, is the *Storia della filosofia greca* (Pavia, 1818–1820) by Defendente Sacchi (1796–1840). Sacchi retraces Greek thought from its origins to its decline in six large tomes, paying less attention to the “history of philosophers” and their succession in time, and more to “that of philosophy”, which is a history of sects, opinions and ideas, searching for the “path that the human spirit followed” through the centuries (cf. I, ‘Introduzione’, pp. XXI–XXIII). It is evidence of the effort to adopt, albeit belatedly, the philological approach promoted by the historiography of philosophy in Germany after Brucker.

The ancients, however, are not only the Romans and the Greeks (credited as being the first philosophers by the Germans, for philological reasons), but also other peoples, most prominently, the ancient Italics, Etruscans, and the inhabitants of Magna Graecia. In the course of the eighteenth century, historians, scholars and above all antiquarians, mainly interested in archeological collections, had paid increasing attention to the Etruscans. It is not by chance that Tiraboschi himself started his *Storia della letteratura italiana* with the Etruscans. Denina's “vicissitudes of literature” also cover the Etruscan people, who had their own literature. The Tuscan jurist, Giovanni Maria Lampredi (1732–1793), professor of public law at the University of Pisa for several years, had also devoted a paper to the Etruscans, bearing the significant title *Saggio sopra la filosofia degli antichi Etruschi. Dissertazione storico critica* (Florence, 1756).

Vincenzo Cuoco devoted his *Platone in Italia* (Milan, 1804–1806; here we follow the edition Bari, 1916–1924, 2 Vols) to the peoples of Magna Graecia, who were also the object of Tiraboschi's interest. This is a work on the “very ancient philosophy of the Italians”, that is to say “on the philosophy of Pythagoras”, which the author himself judges to be “the main subject of the book”.<sup>11</sup> In practice, Cuoco's work is an epistolary novel allegedly based on an ancient, but incomplete, manuscript that he imaginatively reproduces. In this fiction, Cuoco states that we would have had “a history of Italic philosophy different from those by Scheffer and Brucker” (I, p. 8), if that ancient manuscript had not been so incomplete. It is, however, certain that Cleobulus, the protagonist of the novel, “an Athenian [who] comes

<sup>11</sup> Cuoco's work had had precursors in the less famous works by Giuseppe Compagnoni (Lugo di Romagna, 1754 – Milan, 1833), entitled *Epicarmo ossia lo Spartano, dialogo di Platone ultimamente scoperto* (Venice, 1797), which was an exaltation of equal rights between rich and poor, men and women, proclaimed by the French Revolution, and Jean-Jacques Barthélemy (1716–1795), *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce dans le milieu du quatrième siècle avant l'ère vulgaire* (Paris, 1788); cf. above, p. 71.



from his homeland to learn about Pythagoras and Italy”, cannot but acknowledge the grandeur of “all that the Italians have thought” (I, p. 9).<sup>12</sup>

The rediscovery of the philosophy of the Etruscans and the peoples of Magna Graecia inevitably led to the rediscovery of other “ancient peoples” in general, which is precisely the title of a work written in the early nineteenth century by Monsignor Filippo Angelico Becchetti (1742–1814), bishop of Città della Pieve, namely *La filosofia degli antichi popoli* (Perugia, 1812).<sup>13</sup> Despite the “difficulties one encounters in retracing the philosophy of ancient peoples”, the author endeavours to do so with regard to the oldest cosmogonies and theogonies: the Biblical, the Hesiodic, the Homeric, the African, the European, the Phoenician, the Indian, the Persian, and the Gnostic. He then moves on to Greek thought, to the mystery doctrines and finally to the Christian religion: a historically founded and revealed religion, writes Becchetti, and not an allegorical one, as Charles-François Dupuis had maintained in his *Origine de tous les cultes, ou Religion universelle* (Paris, an. III [1795], 4 Vols). The *Ricerche sulle idee metafisiche degli antichi popoli* (Palermo, 1777) by Antonino Pepi (1746–1811) is inspired by the same idea and traces a history of ancient philosophy by looking at the objects treated by metaphysics: the cosmos, the soul, and God. Starting with Thales, the author recounts the whole history of Greek philosophy, then moves on to Barbarian and Eastern philosophy in a continual “comparison between the metaphysical ideas of the ancient and the modern philosophers”. The end result is an attempt at a general history of philosophy, with references to epochs, philosophical schools, and discussions of the historiography of philosophy which reveal Pepi’s considerable interest in the genre. Yet the work not only has an erudite tone, but also aims at being an apology for the Christian religion. Emphatically, yet sincerely, Pepi writes the following invitation to his readers: “Let us therefore run quickly through all that the ancients and the moderns have said about these matters, and when the errors of so many great men have let us see the weakness of our own cognition and knowledge, let us restrain our research and instead of challenging rocks and storms let us rather retire to the harbour of faith and religion” (‘Introduzione’, p. XI).

<sup>12</sup>Cuoco was echoed by the Calabrian physician and philosopher Francesco Lomonaco (1772–1810) in a digression, included in his *Rapporto al cittadino Carnot*, entitled ‘Colpo d’occhio su l’Italia’ (in V. Cuoco, *Saggio storico sulla rivoluzione napoletana del 1799, seguito dal Rapporto al cittadino Carnot di F. Lomonaco*, ed. F. Nicolini, Bari, 1913). After recalling the grandeur of Roman Italy, Lomonaco looks at the period of the Barbarian invasions as the time when “the fog of ignorance had obfuscated the human spirit”. The Middle Ages and the outset of the Modern Age were to be dominated mainly by the “papist religion”: “Everywhere the proclamations of human reason are suffocated by the flames and the weapons of religious intolerance. Everywhere men’s rights are trampled on, holy freedom annihilated, the laws of nature slandered [...]” (pp. 324–326). The author concludes by inciting the “future people of Italy” to trust, among other things, in the “ever-growing lights of philosophy and reason” (p. 328).

<sup>13</sup>Becchetti had already written a very famous ecclesiastic history consisting of 29 volumes (Rome, 1770–1797), a continuation of the equally famous work by Cardinal Giuseppe Agostino Orsi (Rome, 1747–1769), 21 Vols.

The vast compilation by Giovanni Triffon Novello, *Sui principj e progressi della storia naturale considerata in tutte le sue diramazioni, e specialmente nella fisica animastica, e nella metafisica ideologica: colla storica sposizione delle nuove scoperte ed ipotesi primarie, coll'analisi critica delle opere più classiche di vecchi e recenti autori, e con un generale quadro comparativo dell'antica colla moderna filosofia* (Venice, 1809–1811, 6 vols), is still linked to eighteenth-century erudition and polygraphy. Giovanni Triffon Novello (1737–1819), a Venetian nobleman who survived the fall of the Venetian Republic, had been a witness to, and a convinced participant in the philosophical and scientific renewal brought about by Enlightenment reformism, which had also reached the capital of the aristocratic Republic of Venice. His aim was to create a work that was no longer about the “history of human actions”, but natural history, constructed, however, by using the same historiographical categories of “origins” and “progress”. Starting with “primitive times”, the work extends to the “magnificent edifice of the sciences” and their “current great eminence and breadth” (I, p. vi). However, in the course of his verbose, wide ranging work, natural history gradually turns into a more general history of the sciences, and for him, as a scholar of the Enlightenment, the sciences embrace everything that it is possible for man to know, including philosophy and its history. Like Buonafede, Novello also ends up by speaking of the “itinerary of reason”, the “annals of truth that have appeared on occasion”, and of the “splendours of the human mind” (I, p. v). He also recalls those who anticipated him in this, from the ancient Diogenes Laërtius to the medieval Burley, and the modern, Horn, Voss, Jonsius, Deslandes, Stanley, Brucker, and above all the Italians, Cozzando, Capasso, Corsini, Genovesi, Denina, Buonafede, Andrés, Tiraboschi, Bettinelli and Corniani (I, pp. vii–xi). This “natural history”, therefore, contains several parts that concern the historiography of philosophy, such as the “Critical analysis of Plato and Aristotle’s philosophy” (VI, pp. 164–217), or “Aristotelianism and Platonism, the harmful effects of their empire, the benefits of their downfall” (VI, pp. 217–243), and also one of the first testimonies to Kant’s reception in Italy, namely an account of “Immanuel Kant’s transcendental philosophy”, with an extensive “Annotation” on the developments of Kantianism, in the Schellingian movement in particular (IV, pp. 371–421).

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## 4.1 Girolamo Tiraboschi (1731–1794)

### *Storia della letteratura italiana*

**4.1.1** Initially Girolamo Tiraboschi's *Storia della letteratura italiana* does not appear to belong to the genre of the general history of philosophy. In the first place, the title itself presents the work as a history of literature, not philosophy. Secondly, it sets out to restrict its field geographically, taking into consideration only Italian literature. In practice, however, the history of philosophy is an integral part of this work. Moreover, for Tiraboschi 'Italian' means anything that has some connection to Italy, from Etruscan antiquity to modern times. Hence there are in fact no chronological or geographical restrictions to the work, which is open to a general view of both Italian and non-Italian culture as it developed over the centuries.

Girolamo Tiraboschi was born in Bergamo on 18th December, 1731. At the age of 15, he entered the Jesuit Order, where he completed his religious and formal



education. He became a teacher in Milan, at the College of Brera, and from 1770 he was librarian at the famous Library of the Este ducal family in Modena, the third successor (after the Jesuits Antonio Francesco Zaccaria and Giovanni Granelli) to Lodovico Antonio Muratori. It is here that his talents as an erudite historian, court historiographer, scholar, and man of letters fully developed; and it is here that he embarked on the intense cultural and editorial career that lasted until his death towards the end of the century, in 1794.

**4.1.2** Tiraboschi's *Storia della letteratura italiana*, in 10 tomes in quarto, was first published in Modena by the "Società Tipografica" between 1772 and 1782. The second edition, enriched by "copious additions", was published by the same "Società Tipografica" between 1787 and 1794. We refer here to the Milan edition of 1822–1826 (repr. Frankfurt a.M., 1972).

Besides this great work, we can quote others: the *Vetera Humiliatorum Monumenta* (Milan, 1766) in three tomes, a collection of documents concerning the Umiliati, a religious order that existed in Lombardy from the twelfth to the sixteenth century; the *Biblioteca Modenese, o Notizie della vita e delle opere degli scrittori nativi degli Stati del serenissimo duca di Modena* (Modena, 1781–1786, 7 Vols); and the *Memorie storiche modenese* (Modena, 1793, 5 tomes). Because of their philosophical interest, particular mention must be made of the two "historical recollections" on the Copernican system and the events concerning Galileo: *Sui primi promotori del sistema copernicano* and *Sulla condanna del Galileo e del sistema copernicano*, both published in the second Modenese edition of the *Storia della letteratura italiana* (cf. ed. Milan, 1822–1826, VIII/1, pp. 502–518 and 519–536). In these works Tiraboschi strives to make a distinction between the institution of the Catholic Church and the Holy Inquisition, which, according to him, was the sole body responsible for Galileo's trial. One should also remember that Tiraboschi was the founder of the *Nuovo Giornale de' Letterati d'Italia*, one of the most successful journals of the century, which was published in Modena from 1773 and contained several of Tiraboschi's own original contributions, besides all the customary "summaries" or "extracts" of works he edited.

**4.1.3** In his *Storia della letteratura italiana* Tiraboschi adopts the traditional concept of literature as culture. The subject of literature, therefore, is not only the so-called belles-lettres but all types of culture, that is to say, all human knowledge, "pleasant letters" and "austere" sciences, liberal arts and all the means that have been used throughout the centuries to promote culture. Tiraboschi places philosophy and its history among the sciences, and not among the "pleasant and delectable studies" (I, p. 134) such as poetry, eloquence, history and the liberal arts. In particular, philosophy is included among the "serious and severe studies", such as mathematics (I, p. 130), or yet again among "the serious and grave arts" (I, p. 69), such as religious studies, natural history, anatomy, medicine and civil and ecclesiastic jurisprudence. Philosophy which is "solid and true" is, in fact, taught to us by "the very light of the reason" man is endowed with, not by feelings or an aesthetic sense, which by their nature seek beauty (I, p. 476). There is a great

difference between “sciences” and “liberal arts” even if their names “are at times promiscuously confused”. “We call *Sciences* those that have what is *true* as their primary object; we call *Liberal Arts* those that have *beauty* as their primary object. In the former, only reason and experiment are used; in the latter, imagination. To the former therefore belong theology, philosophy, mathematics, history (as it is the search for things that have happened), classical studies, and other similar types of teaching by means of which man aims to discover a truth hitherto unknown. To the latter belong eloquence, poetry, painting, sculpture and architecture, in which the imagination makes every effort to attain that beauty which their perfection requires” (I, pp. 409–411).

The perfection of the sciences is constituted by the conquest of truth, and the perfection of liberal arts by the conquest of beauty, “which consists in unity, distribution, order, and the expression of the parts” (I, p. 414). The path followed by the latter is relatively easy compared to that taken by the former. The sciences of truth, moreover, are subject in their *iter* “to error [ . . . ] until the truth is discovered and proven” (I, p. 411). The sciences carry out their enquiries in the realm of nature which “is so vast and spacious that however many discoveries are made, there are even more that still remain to be made”. Thus, sciences are characterized by unlimited progress, whereas the liberal arts are not, because when they reach perfect beauty, “wanting to proceed further is the same as retreating”. “This is what we have seen happen in the three sister arts, painting, sculpture and architecture”, continues Tiraboschi. “When these arose again after the barbaric centuries, they slowly grew for two centuries until they could be called perfect in the sixteenth. Those who came after did not want to be imitators, but wanted to add new beauties and new ornaments to them, and thus made them degenerate from the perfection they had risen to” (I, pp. 414–415). Though the sciences and the liberal arts differ greatly as to their field of inquiry and development, they nevertheless share a certain historical coordination. “One, in fact, can neither rise to a happier state nor miserably degenerate without the other encountering the same fate” (II, p. 515).

There are no particular definitions of philosophy in Tiraboschi’s *Storia*, but it is possible to get an idea of the way he conceived this discipline through the structure of the work. We have already seen that he not only included philosophy among the sciences, but also considered it to be a science in itself. In particular, it is treated together with mathematics and frequently with medicine. More specifically, for Tiraboschi, ‘philosophy’ is the science devoted to reading and interpreting the great book of nature. This explains the large amount of space devoted to Tommaso Campanella, the philosopher who suggested reading nature *iuxta propria principia*, and to Galileo who, as Hume himself said, surpassed even the Englishman Bacon in the philosophy of nature (cf. VIII/1, pp. 298–299). In reality, this is not properly an Enlightenment concept of philosophy, tending as it does to make philosophy coincide essentially with the philosophy of nature. This might explain Tiraboschi’s lack not only of a sensitivity towards metaphysics, but also of the tendency of the period to read Italian literary and cultural history in a metaphysical light. As a result, the history of philosophy becomes an account of the course of human reflection on the cosmos, nature, and the principles and laws that govern it. It is not the

history of moral or political philosophy, which are disciplines systematically placed after the treatment of mathematics. Hence a figure like Francesco Piccolomini and his moral philosophy is to be found after the writers that are somehow related to mathematical subjects (architecture, nautical science, music, agriculture, commerce, etc.) (cf. VII/2, pp. 846–848).

Tiraboschi's concept of history, on the other hand, is enlightening. This discipline "may be included both among the sciences, which aim to discover the truth, and among the study of pleasant literature, which has beauty as its primary object. Since it is the search for, and examination of, events that have occurred, it belongs to the former; since it is the cultured and orderly exposition of these facts, it belongs to the latter" (IV, p. 467). It may be supposed that the history of philosophy is conceived in a similar manner, according to an approach that not only preserves the framework of a rhetorical, classicalizing type, which could still be found in the Age of the Enlightenment, but also certainly echoes Vico, whose teachings circulated widely among cultured Italians.

#### 4.1.4 *Storia della letteratura italiana*

**4.1.4.1** The Milanese edition of 1822–1826 follows a previous edition published in Venice, and includes and puts in order all the additions made by the author to his second Modenese edition (see I, 'Avvertimento', p. III). In this edition, the *Storia della letteratura italiana* consists of 8 tomes, totalling 11 volumes, with a further twelfth volume devoted to the "General index of subjects". The subject matter is divided as follows. The first two tomes comprise ancient "Italic" literature: Etruscan literature, the literature that developed in Magna Graecia and ancient Sicily and, finally, that of Ancient Rome. The third tome deals with the early Middle Ages, that is to say, from the "destruction of the Western Empire" to the Peace of Constance (1183). Treatment of "Italian" literature, in the modern sense of the term, starts only in the fourth tome, "from the year 1183 to the year 1300", whose structure differs from that of the previous sections. While in the first three tomes the treatment progresses according to the peoples native to Italy, or their conquerors (Etruscans, inhabitants of Magna Graecia, Romans, Lombards, Franks, Germans), here it is developed according to a fixed framework: each tome is divided into three books, the first of which concerns the "means adopted to promote studies", the second the "sciences", and the third "belles-lettres and arts".

Each book, in turn, is subdivided into chapters whose titles almost constitute a paradigm of the literary history of each century. Book One: 'A General Idea of the State of Italy' in the period considered, 'The Favour and Munificence of Princes in Promoting Studies', 'The Universities and Other Public Schools', 'Libraries', and 'Travels'. Book Two: 'Religious Studies', 'Philosophy and Mathematics', 'Medicine', 'Civil Jurisprudence', 'Ecclesiastic Jurisprudence', and 'History'. Book Three: 'Foreign Languages', ['Provençal Poetry'], 'Italian Poetry', 'Latin Poetry', 'Grammar and Eloquence', and the 'Liberal Arts'. The only modification in the

course of the whole work concerns ‘History’, which from the sixth tome, that is to say from the fifteenth century onwards, is placed in the third book on belles-lettres instead of the second book devoted to the “austere sciences” (i.e. religious sciences, philosophy, mathematics, medicine, and jurisprudence), revealing a sensitivity to form and literary aesthetics, despite some uncertainty as to classification. Furthermore, from the fifth tome onwards each tome is devoted to a century: hence the fifth tome is devoted to the fourteenth, the sixth to the fifteenth, the seventh to the sixteenth, and the eighth to the seventeenth century. The work stops on the threshold of the eighteenth century, which the author does not intend to deal with.

**4.1.4.2** As we have seen, Tiraboschi’s history of Italian “literature” is extremely wide-ranging, and it is possible to see a general periodization pertaining not only to the history of belles-lettres but also to the history of philosophical thought as it developed through the centuries. The history begins with the Etruscans and the peoples of Magna Graecia, which with regard to philosophy, gave rise to the Pythagorean and Eleatic schools. It continues with Roman literature, which is divided into three periods: “from the founding of Rome to the end of the first Carthaginian war”; “from the end of the first Carthaginian war to the destruction of Carthage”; “from the destruction of Carthage to the death of Augustus”. Here, as far as philosophy is concerned, we can distinguish three periods: the period of its origins, marked by the famous “expulsion” of philosophers by Cato; the age of Cicero, which marks the full acceptance of Greek philosophy; and finally, the age of the Empire, with the extraordinary flourishing of Stoicism, mainly thanks to Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius. The rest of the history of Roman philosophy in Tiraboschi’s treatment repeats the usual historiographical stages: the spread of Neoplatonism and Eclecticism in the Hellenist age and the decline and complete abandonment of philosophy at the time of Symmachus.

The Roman era is then followed by the early Middle Ages, which cover the time from the destruction of the Western Empire until the year 1183, subdivided in turn into four periods: “from the destruction of the Western Empire to the beginning of the Lombard kingdom”; “the Lombard kingdom”; “from the time of Charlemagne to the death of Otto III”; “from the death of Otto III to the Peace of Constance”. Even within the broad chronological range considered by Tiraboschi, the history of philosophy is marked by individual personalities rather than by schools or by well-defined periods. Thus, in the first period, the work of Cassiodorus and Boethius is highlighted, in the second that of Gregory the Great, in the third that of Gerbert, and finally in the fourth that of Anselm of Aosta, Peter Lombard, Peter Damien, Lanfranc and John the Philosopher.

From the thirteenth century onwards, the work no longer follows either the great historical ages or the historiographical distinctions (Middle Ages, Humanism, Renaissance, Baroque, Enlightenment) commonly adopted today by literary histories, but is arranged according to the individual centuries. This division was “the only one possible for the precise and schematic classifying mentality of the Modenese Librarian” (Getto, p. 91). From this point of view, Tiraboschi’s work undoubtedly lags behind the general development of historiography and in particular modern historiography of philosophy. The historiographical categories

of Medieval, Humanist, and “Restoration” are omitted, or at best obscured by Tiraboschi’s a-historical classification by centuries. In reality, by adopting the criterion of “century” as the factor ordering the chronological development, Girolamo Tiraboschi joined an erudite tradition that had begun in the sixteenth century with Matthias Flacius’ *Centuriae* and continued in the eighteenth with the Maurists and their *Histoire littéraire*, rather than a more advanced philosophical and literary historiography. This division by centuries leads to an arrangement of “Italian” literary history over five periods, including one for each century from the thirteenth to seventeenth century. “My work will end”, wrote Tiraboschi in the preface to the last tome, “with the history of the seventeenth century, since I do not think I shall venture into our century. We judge the learned of previous centuries. Let posterity judge us [...]” (VIII/1, p. VI). This, however, does not prevent him from depicting his own century as well, a century he considered to be a period of progress not only in the field of sciences, then so highly venerated, but also in that of literature.

**4.1.4.3** The dominant characteristic, and the basic inspiration for Tiraboschi’s historiography, is the conscious feeling of Italianism that pervades all the tomes of his work, from the early Etruscans to times closer to his own. It is obviously not possible to speak of a true nationalistic spirit, which was only to reveal itself in the mid-nineteenth century, but rather of a theme that might be termed sentimental, placing Tiraboschi’s *Storia*, like Gimma’s *Idea della storia dell’Italia letterata* (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 268–278), at the origins of a particularly successful tradition of literary historiography. “There is no sincere, unbiased writer”, wrote Tiraboschi in the preface to the first Modenese edition of his *History*, “who does not willingly grant our Italy with the glorious title of mother and nurse of the sciences and the arts”. And he continued: “The favour they have enjoyed among us, and the fervour with which they have been cultivated by our countrymen, both in the happier times of the Roman Empire and the joyous centuries of their resurrection, has led them to such perfection, and raised them to such honour, that foreigners, even those who are most jealous of their own glory, are forced to confess that it was with us that the bright light arose which shone in their eyes and let them see things they had hitherto not known” (I, p. 10). “This History of mine”, he was to repeat in the preface to tome IV, devoted to the last period of the Middle Ages, “is addressed to the honour of all Italy [...]. I desire nothing else but to expose in its true light how much all letters and sciences owe to Italy, so that some foreigners may learn to feel and write with less contempt for Italians, and some Italians may also finally cease to be too much the blind admirers and servile adulators of foreigners” (IV, pp. V–VI).

Italy was always ahead of other nations in the sciences and the arts, both in antiquity and in the modern era. In his treatment of the Etruscans, Tiraboschi openly proclaims the primacy of the Italians when speaking of painting: “It is enough for me to demonstrate that nobody in Europe made use of it before the Italians, that is before the Etruscans [...]” (I, p. 45). Further on, he observes when writing about the inhabitants of Magna Graecia: “Nobody [...] will be pained if we ascribe the literature of those peoples who inhabited this part of Italy in ancient times to the glory of Italy”. “The literary history of any province whatsoever”, he states with clear intentions, “is the history of those peoples who lived in that province,

whether it was their ancient fatherland or whether they were led there from another region" (I, p. 82). Once again, honour is paid to Italy which may "vaunt" that it had "rediscovered from the earliest of times" [that is to say, from the Pythagoreans] even the Copernican system. In those remote times, "while the whole of Europe, if one excepts only a small part of Greece, was lying in the shades of ignorance and buried deep in barbarity", in Italy "the sciences were cultivated by our greatest men, with such success" (I, pp. 93–95).

In the centuries that followed, Rome became "the capital of the whole world: it was the ordinary seat of the emperors [. . .]. It is no wonder, therefore, that the most famous poets, orators, philosophers and men of erudition of all manner should find themselves gathered together in this, I should almost say, common centre" (II, p. 519). And, in the darkest period in the history of Western civilisation, the Middle Ages, the glory of the Italians was not dimmed. Italians took part in the Carolingian Renaissance: "it seems to me that I can affirm three things that bring glory to Italy, that is, in the first place, that Charlemagne was indebted to an Italian for his first approach to studies; in the second place, that Charlemagne never sent any foreigner to teach in Italy; in the third and last place, that many Italians were sent to France by Charlemagne to resurrect studies there" (III, pp. 227–228). Still in Carolingian times, Bishop Theodulph of Orléans is a "glory" that Italians can claim as their own, a comment aimed at the nationalist resentment of the Spaniard Abbot Lampillas, who in a highly polemical *Saggio storico-apologetico della letteratura spagnuola* (Genoa, 1778–1781, 6 tomes) had reproached Tiraboschi not only for having generally ignored the "glories" of Spain, but also for having attributed Italian nationality to men from the Iberian peninsula.

Towards the end of the long Middle Ages, at the dawn of the rebirth of letters and sciences, we once again find Italians among the main architects of this cultural and civic reawakening. In one significant section, in an attempt at historiographical synthesis after so many pages of an analytical style, Tiraboschi describes the development of philosophical knowledge through the centuries: "In the most ancient times, philosophy among the Italians had made that very happy progress that we observed in the first tome when speaking of the two ancient schools that flourished there, the Pythagorean and the Eleatic. By disseminating Aristotle's books and rendering in their languages the opinions and systems of the most illustrious philosophers, the Romans added new embellishment to it. Now, in the state of decline in which it lay, Italians to the same degree were the first to call it back to life, so to speak, and to open the door not only to their fellow countrymen but also to other nations, in the rediscovery of those very same truths that their predecessors had illustrated to the same degree, and in the further investigation into the realm of nature". The names of these Italians who were the first to promote the rebirth of philosophy are the "renowned", "great men" Lanfranc and Anselm of Aosta. Known to the English as "Anselm of Canterbury", Anselm also resurrected "philosophical studies" in France, where "they had hitherto lain forgotten and neglected", as testified to by the Maurists themselves, who certainly cannot be accused of being "adulators of the Italians" (III, pp. 539–541). But as we shall see, Italy's glory was to reach its apogee in the modern age with Galileo.

A “love of the fatherland”, however, must not eclipse a “love of truth”. To the glory of Italy, some would have it that Pythagoras was born in Etruria. “But”, says Tiraboschi, “this fact is so uncertain that it cannot be asserted with any likely foundation”. One must not “let oneself be transported through love of the fatherland beyond what is fitting for a sincere and critical historian” (I, pp. 72–73). In short, Pythagoras was not an Etruscan, or at least “it is something entirely doubtful and uncertain”. Nevertheless “that he did live for some time in Etruria [...] is a glory that cannot be so easily denied” (I, p. 76). Indeed, “if he was not an Italian by birth, Italy can nevertheless rightfully boast such an illustrious philosopher. He undoubtedly stayed there a long time, and precisely in that area with which we are now dealing, namely Magna Graecia, he distinguished himself singularly and became famous for his new dogmas” (I, p. 84).

Tiraboschi’s *Storia* also contains more particular historiographical ideas concerning the individual disciplines, the history of which is recounted century by century. Here we shall examine his theories specifically concerning philosophy, its history, and the historiography of philosophy. Starting with the literature of those whom we might call the ‘Italics’, that is, the Etruscans and the peoples of Magna Graecia and Sicily, as far as philosophy is concerned, Tiraboschi cannot help but see the “dark shadows” in which the history of their philosophical thought was enveloped, something much bewailed by all historians and scholars studying the ancient knowledge of these peoples (cf. I, p. 186). In general, however, “all the philosophy of the ancients [and not only of the Etruscans] is enveloped in dark shadows, and is obscured by both the ignorance they themselves had of many things, of which, therefore, they were obliged to speak obscurely if they wished to show that they did indeed know something” (I, pp. 100–101). However, despite such difficulties, and following historians of philosophy such as Cudworth and Mosheim, it is easy for Tiraboschi to point out “the gross errors found in the Etruscans’ philosophy”, their many “superstitions” and the “ravings” of those “ancient philosophizers” (I, pp. 62–64).

Tiraboschi’s opinion on the status of Roman philosophy repeats the common opinion of all historiography of philosophy inspired by Brucker. The Romans only became philosophers very belatedly, so it can clearly be stated that until Cicero, according to his own testimony, philosophy was the object of neglect (cf. I, p. 192; p. 260). In any case, it was not the people of classical Greece, “which is commonly thought and said to be the mother and mistress of all sciences”, who introduced this country of farmers and conquerors to the mysteries of philosophy and the “lights of the sciences” (I, p. 199), but those of Magna Graecia, Sicily and Etruria. From these early inhabitants of Italy the Romans “had the first lights of the sciences”; from them came “the first love of letters among the Romans”.<sup>14</sup> And the Romans not

<sup>14</sup>Tiraboschi’s claims anticipate the theory of the “primacy” of the Italians, which was to be systematically theorized in Cuoco’s *Platone in Italia*, and then in Gioberti’s *Primato morale e civile degli Italiani*, becoming a fundamental theme in the political philosophy of nineteenth-century Italy.

only “surpassed the Greeks in arms”, but ended up by “surpassing them in the study of the fine arts” (I, p. 186). According to Tiraboschi, the history of the introduction of classical Greek philosophy to the Romans is a history of alternating contrasts, in which the famous embassy of the three Greek philosophers – the “heads of the three philosophical sects that flourished in Greece, Carneades of the Academic, Diogenes of the Stoic, and Critolaus of the Peripatetic” (I, p. 248) – is the most significant example of the Romans’ distrust of foreign knowledge. Yet Tiraboschi’s patriotism does not prevent him from acknowledging the philosophical greatness of classical Greece. Plato, for example, is defined as “the divine” for his knowledge, “the severe” for his rectitude, and one of “the fathers of ancient philosophy” (I, pp. 98 and 162; VII/2, p. 653). Aristotle and all the other great Greek philosophers are considered by Tiraboschi just as they were by the classicist culture, which had drawn its profoundest inspiration from the rediscovery of antiquity.

After the Roman era, the history of ‘Italian’ philosophy witnessed a succession of “barbaric centuries”, marked by “ignorance” and “prejudice” (IV, p. 309). First of all come the times of Boethius and Cassiodorus, which were certainly neither “joyful” nor “peaceful”, marked as they were by “wars”, “desolation”, and “massacres”. Philosophy is indebted to Boethius above all. “He was, in fact, the first to make Scholastic philosophy Latin, so to speak”, says Tiraboschi, using the word ‘philosophy’ to mean ‘logic’. “Indeed, he also introduced Scholastic philosophy into theology before all others, as can be seen in some of his theological pamphlets, especially the one against Nestorius and Eutyches” (III, pp. 76–77). However, the efforts of Cassiodorus and Boethius were crushed by the iniquity of the times, and, Tiraboschi bitterly concludes, “Italy went back to being submerged, even more deeply than before, in the barbarity and ignorance from which these two great men had tried to free it” (III, p. 92).

Worse times (“times of squalor and universal desolation”) were to come with the arrival of the Lombards (I, p. 121). “It was as if even the word ‘philosophy’ had perished in Italy”; and, like Brucker, Tiraboschi observes that “the only shelter left for philosophy, which had been banished everywhere, was the monasteries,” (III, p. 209). Despite its cultural rebirth, the Carolingian age that followed the Lombards did not have any true philosophers. “The title of philosopher in these early centuries was generally given to anyone who had read something, of any nature whatsoever”. Hence the 32 ‘philosophers’ present in Benevento in around 870, mentioned by the *Historia* of an anonymous writer from Salerno, were only “men who knew how to write in some sort of Latin, in verse, which was, so to speak, the height of literary praise that could be reached then” (III, p. 374).

The “happy times” when we can “see Italian literature arise again”, writes Tiraboschi, still dwelling on the Ottonian age, “are far ahead, and we must remain for a long time enveloped in shadows and horrors before we will see a clear, bright dawn” (III, p. 394). Philosophy in particular began “to arise from the squalor in which it had lain for so many centuries” (III, p. 595) only at the time of Anselm and Lanfranc, both archbishops of Canterbury, and Peter Lombard, the master of the *Sentences*. In the thirteenth century the rebirth of philosophy and mathematics could also be seen in some way. “Aristotle, hitherto forgotten, was seen to predominate



in the schools and he occupied the minds and pens of the most famous Italian professors, while war was being waged in France at the same time, and Aristotle was thrown into the flames as an impious and irreligious author" (IV, p. 237). Tiraboschi adds that the first to "render Aristotle in Latin and interpret him" (IV, p. 238) was an Italian, the Venetian Jacobus clericus (James the Greek of Venice), unknown even to Fabricius, "towards the year 1128", as is stated by Robert of Monte (Robert of Torigni, abbot of Mont Saint-Michel), a contemporary writer. James of Venice translated the texts directly from Greek and not from corrupt Arabic versions.

As yet, however, this is not a true rebirth of philosophy. Despite the dissemination of Aristotle's thought in the Western world, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were still marked by "a coarse, barbaric philosophy that was content with searching for what others had discovered rather than penetrating further and discovering the vast realm of nature of which too little was still known. As it was obliged to search either in their [the ancient philosophers] original books miserably ruined by ignorant copyists or in translations that were not so accurate or good, this philosophy not only blindly adopted all the errors of the ancients but often added new ones. The subtleties and useless speculations of the Arabs had made it [philosophy] increasingly coarse, and philosophizing was almost nothing but a mysterious and obscure use of a jargon that was mostly not even understood by those who used it. This is how things had been in the previous century, and so they continued in the one of which we now write [the fourteenth]. Indeed, as if the received errors were not enough, new ones were introduced, and one sect [Averroism] in particular spread through the schools of Italy, causing great harm not only to the sciences but also to customs, and led many to that deleterious freedom of thought which up to then had been considered to be that of the cleverest minds, which then put down such strong and widespread roots" (V/1, pp. 276–277).

In the fourteenth century, the abuse of dialectic was even introduced into the study of theology. Scholastic theology had been "elevated" in the previous century by Aquinas, Bonaventure, and other writers. Yet in the fourteenth century "we see, so to speak, Scholastic theologians appear from all corners, some interpreting the very same books that their predecessors had interpreted, others beginning to interpret these interpretations and comment on commentaries, and wishing to throw new light they frequently make the shadows even darker by explaining what had been clear before. I do not think that anybody who reads this *Storia* of mine will require me to give a tiresome list here of the interpreters of the books the *Sentences*, of St. Thomas' *Summa*, or of Scotus' Theology, and of other such writers who now lie forgotten in dusty libraries, where we heartily wish that nobody will ever disturb their sweet repose". Tiraboschi then appeals to the testimony of Petrarch, who "even in his time was pained to see that the abuse of dialectics had infected and ruined theology" (V/1, pp. 202–203).

To Tiraboschi's mind, the Scholastic theologians and philosophers who can be saved are principally Aquinas and Bonaventure. To a "profundity of research and a vigour of reason" Aquinas "adds an order, a connection, a clarity, and a singular precision of his own, so that the text is often clearer than the commentary and explanation that others have added to it". Tiraboschi also writes that "the Scholastic

terms used by him” cause “at times” an “impediment and displeasure to those who read him”, and that “he adhered to the prejudices of his century” and “held some opinions that he would have challenged in another age”. However one should also consider the claims of Aquinas’ numerous “apologists”, both ancient and modern (Erasmus, Brucker, Fontenelle and others), who speak out against the “many” that “there still are, and will probably be in all ages, who speak of him with disdain, and, without ever having happened to read a single line, deride him as a miserable and obscure Scholastic too unworthy of praise as an unbiased philosopher” (IV, pp. 192–194). Unlike Aquinas, Bonaventure was a theologian rather than a philosopher; indeed he “hardly touched on philosophical questions”. Jean Gerson, the renowned chancellor of the University of Paris, “had no doubts about putting him before all other theologians, saying that he found him to be a judicious and sensible writer who does not write to satisfy the curiosity common to all men of learning, who avoids all questions that are not connected to his topic, and who combines solidity of doctrine with the unction of piety”. Brucker also “confesses that without doubt he must be placed among the best Scholastics, and that he is owed great praise because in seeing, as he says, the sterile straw and the base weeds that infected theology everywhere, he made an effort to write sounder and more advantageous things” (IV, pp. 199–200).

After the Scholastics, the next significant thinkers were Peter of Abano, Marsilius of Padua, Dante Alighieri, and above all the “great” Petrarch. These figures can be considered to be at the origins of a new era, with its renewal not only of the field of philosophy but of all other sciences, letters, and arts. It is said of Marsilius of Padua that he was “a man with a great mind who might have brought great benefit to the Church if he had not rebelled against it” (V/1, p. 260). “An equally famous man” was the philosopher and physician Peter of Abano, “the first [ . . . ] to recommend Averroës’ works to the Italians, and to use them in his writing” (V/1, p. 278), a man who led a errant life and was criticized and censured for his manifest sympathy for magic, astrology, and the art of divining. However, the dominant personality of the fourteenth century was Petrarch, whose life and works are described by Tiraboschi in one of the longest sections of his *Storia* (V/2 pp. 762–823; but also *passim*). In Tiraboschi’s treatment, Petrarch belongs above all to the history of the sciences (particularly theology, philosophy, and medicine) and more universally to the history of culture and civilisation, rather than to that of belles-lettres and poetry. He gains Tiraboschi’s highest commendation mainly for his “keenness to discover the works of ancient writers”, for his continual travels that bring him into contact with patrons and men of learning from every country, and for his new way of conceiving life and history, religion and letters. Petrarch, “poet, orator, philosopher, geographer, historian, and antiquary illustrated every science, and had imitators and disciples in every science” (V/1, pp. 2–3). “Moral philosophy in particular found in him an illustrious writer”. After this statement, mention is made of the *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, the *De vita solitaria*, the *De vera sapientia*, and the *De contemptu mundi*, all works that, despite containing “many ascetic reflections” almost in imitation of the “sincere and humble *Confessions* of St. Augustine”, “have nevertheless taken several things from sources of moral philosophy, and reveal the

study Petrarch had made not only of ancient writers on the subject, but also of the nature of the human heart, which is of more benefit" (V/1, pp. 355–356).

Tiraboschi's history of philosophy proceeds to list other "restorers of philosophy" (VIII/1, p. 278). A lot of space is devoted to the Renaissance figure Tommaso Campanella, "a very learned man of great erudition and excellent discernment", with a "sharp and penetrating mind". He abandoned himself, however, "to the most puerile superstitions", ending up with a philosophy that "is a set of dreams enveloped in highly obscure terms, which when read leads us into an inextricable maze and gives us no other reward than tiring ourselves out on such a complicated path. He normally follows the opinions of Telesio, but he frequently departs from them to fall into even graver errors. In short, we can say of him what was said of Cardano, that is, he could have greatly benefitted sciences if he had contained his imagination and his mind" (VIII/1, pp. 246–248).

From Campanella we then move on to the "great" Galileo, who "with free and steady step boldly ventured into the vast and unknown realm of nature" (VIII/1, p. 248). "From the years of his youth he knew that up to then nothing had taken place in the schools but useless speculation; that a thousand different systems had been imagined which were nothing but hot air because they were grounded in the imagination of the philosophers more than in a knowledge of nature; that the authority of Aristotle for some, and that of Plato, Parmenides, and Epicurus for others, had commonly been the guide they had blindly followed, believing that only the ancient philosophers had had the gift of understanding and reasoning, and that it was not permissible to stray from their opinions without committing a serious crime. He had the courage to question whether they had known nature well; but instead of combatting their useless speculation with equally useless subtleties, as Patrizi, Cardan, Bruno and other philosophers in the previous century had done, he set himself the task of diligently studying the nature and properties of things created. Galileo was not the creator of a system because he knew that wanting to reduce the phenomena of nature to certain, fixed principles, without first knowing its characteristics and laws, was the same as erecting a huge building without first laying solid foundations" (VIII/1, pp. 278–279).

Praise of Galileo continues page after page for a lengthy section of the work. Galileo, in the unanimous opinion of the "most learned philosophers", is considered to be "one of the rarest geniuses ever produced by nature" (VIII/1, p. 298). His principle "of studying attentively the phenomena of nature, and of examining separately the laws it obeys in its workings, instead of establishing a general system to which all phenomena must be reduced despite themselves" (VIII/1, p. 354), is directly opposed to the Cartesian system. Descartes, Tiraboschi states, "puffed up with his system and the applause with which he saw it received by his fellow Frenchmen, wrote with intolerable disdain of Galileo [...]; if he were now to raise his head, he would see that his system has by now been abandoned and considered no differently from a dream, and that Galileo's observations, on the contrary, are commonly recognized and adopted as principles on which nearly all modern philosophy is based" (VIII/1, pp. 279–280). Yet even in Italy "there are [...]" those who, instead of following the safe path indicated by [Galileo], continually

confirmed by so many experiments, prefer to follow Descartes' dream and be caught up with him in his dark and impenetrable vortices" (VIII/1, p. 376). Here Tiraboschi mentions the Cartesians Tommaso Cornelio and Michelangelo Fardella, "who with their intelligence increased the fame of Cartesian philosophy in Italy, and would perhaps have spread it if the Peripatetics on the one hand, with their loyalty to their ancient Master, and the followers of Galileo's opinions on the other, with the evidence of their experiments and the strength of their demonstrations, had not prevented its further progress" (VIII/1, pp. 376–377).

Implicit in this statement is a condemnation of the entire modern Aristotelian movement. Elsewhere Tiraboschi speaks of the "tiresome series of commentators on Aristotle and supporters of Peripateticism, who in believing that it was not possible to feel differently from what was felt centuries before, without committing a serious crime, went around shouting that modern philosophers were in the wrong because they did not follow Aristotle. Italy had many of these (and Descartes became aware that France also had many), who thought they could become famous by writing new commentaries on the master and oracle of ancient philosophy" (VIII/1, pp. 238–239). Among those he deigns to briefly mention is Fortunio Liceto ("a highly passionate follower of Aristotle") merely "for the prodigious number of works he wrote" (VIII/1, pp. 239–240). The history of modern philosophy is full of Peripatetics from the sixteenth century onwards. "They were convinced", Tiraboschi writes, "that Aristotle was an oracle who could not be contradicted without committing impiety, and instead of studying nature and discovering whether Aristotle had known its laws properly, they thought they should devote all their energies to understanding and explaining the works of this ancient philosopher and subjecting nature to the laws he had prescribed for it". He continues: "What benefit is to be had by spending time recognizing their opinions, or better, their errors? To what end does one busy oneself seeking the tiniest details in the life of such authors, whose works now lie quite forgotten, while so many others, who exercised their brains far more usefully, seem to invite us to speak of them?" (VII/2, pp. 632–633). Among this group of Aristotelians, Tiraboschi lists Jacopo Zabarella, Alessandro Piccolomini, Jacopo Mazzoni, Camillo Paleotti, Ciriaco Strozzi and Federico Pendasio, besides Cesare Cremonini, Andrea Cesalpino, and many more.

The Peripatetic philosophers of the modern age are opposed to the Platonists, who, "with no less commitment, dedicated themselves to combatting Aristotle's opinions, either by directly challenging those he upheld or by putting Plato before him, and to clarifying the works of this second father of ancient philosophy with their commentaries" (VII/2, p. 653). Tiraboschi counts not only Francesco Zorzi and Francesco Patrizi as Platonists, but also Mario Nizolio and the two Picos. Then, classified separately, come those whom Tiraboschi considers as neither Aristotelians nor Platonists, nor true restorers of philosophy, but as "innovators": Bernardino Telesio, who was "no more satisfied with Plato than he was with Aristotle" (VII/2, p. 675); Girolamo Cardano and Giordano Bruno, who can claim "the glory shaking themselves free from every yoke, and of not recognizing any guide but their own mind" (VII/2, p. 679). Tiraboschi's appreciation of Giordano Bruno is limited, however, by judgements like the following: "Verbose, confused, obscure, in many

places one can hardly understand what he means". And he continues, following Bayle: "there is no Thomist or Scotist more obscure than he" (VII/2, p. 698).

The modern age witnessed not only the resurrection of philosophy but also of theology, with the "great Council of Trent". By that time, theology had been reduced to "useless, cold speculation", "a thousand strange, barbaric words", and the "narrow confines of Scholastic subtleties". Tiraboschi writes with regret: "Scholastic theology had been wisely used by St. Anselm, Peter Lombard, St. Thomas, and their early followers to reduce the truths of the Catholic religion almost to a system, and it had been treated with such order and such clarity that it could serve as a model to the following centuries. But later it degenerated from its status as a worthy institution: cold, useless speculation took the place of right, just ratiocination; a thousand barbaric, strange words disfigured it and rendered it unintelligible to the very ones who were its masters" (VII/1, pp. 403–404).

Unlike the sixteenth century, the seventeenth was one in which "everything seemed to breathe languor and indolence". The "elegance" of this century "seems to have changed in most writers into a deplorable coarseness". While this was true generally speaking, where the development of thought was concerned, the seventeenth century was, by contrast, "the century when philosophy truly emerged from the barbarous situation in which it had lain so for long in the previous centuries. Mathematics made such happy progress that even after the perfection to which it has been brought in our century, it must nevertheless be confessed that it is to a great extent indebted to the minds of the previous century. Now, this resurrection of philosophy and mathematics happened as a result of the work of Italians, and the new light that arose among us only afterwards started to spread to the distant regions". This is the century of the "great" Galileo, announces Tiraboschi, the century when the "master and oracle of ancient philosophy", Aristotle, was finally abandoned by the "restorers of philosophy" (VIII/1, pp. 237–238).

While Tiraboschi's history of "Italian" literature and "Italian" philosophy comes to an end with the seventeenth century, it also contains some assessment of the eighteenth century, which is judged to be undoubtedly "great" and "luminous". "For anyone who will deal with it at the appropriate time", writes Tiraboschi in the preface to tome IX of the first edition, "the state of Italian literature in the first fifty years of this century, to mention only this period, without venturing into times closer to our own, will be a vast, enlightened subject. Even if Italy had no one else to its credit in the course of this period than Muratori or Maffei, should it not be joyful and proud of them alone?" (VIII/2, p. v). He then lists several other Italians, including Apostolo Zeno, Giampietro and Francesco Maria Zanotti, Antonio Conti, Odoardo Corsini, Jacopo Riccati, and Antonio Vallisneri. Outside Italy, the "great Leibniz" is to be noted above all (I, p. 109 and III, p. 543). Leibniz has "the authority of one of the sublimest metaphysicians of recent years", and, according to Tiraboschi, he authoritatively attributed the "demonstration of the existence of God, taken from the very idea of a supreme Being", to the medieval saint, Anselm of Aosta, and not to Descartes, as was commonly believed (III, p. 543).

Tiraboschi was not only a master of erudition, with all his enthusiasm for the cultural progress of his time, but also a man of the Church, with the soul of a

Jesuit, clearly not at peace with the libertarian and a-religious spirit of his times. He is critical of Rousseau, “the celebrated modern philosopher”, who, against the scientific spirit of the age, paradoxically “dared to persuade us that the cultivation of the sciences has led to the ruin of kingdoms” (I, p. 271). Tiraboschi is generally critical of those modern philosophers “who want to be honoured as free thinkers, and boast that they have dispersed the shadows in which superstition and ignorance had hitherto miserably shrouded people” (I, pp. 101 and 103). In his *Storia*, we often come across a kind of *querelle* between the Ancients and the Moderns, in which Tiraboschi clearly sides with the Ancients. “It thus frequently happens”, he writes, commenting on Anselm’s primacy in elaborating the ‘ontological’ proof of the existence of God expounded in his *Proslogion*, “that the Moderns make themselves look good by using the discoveries of ancient authors, and that these discoveries, which would perhaps have been derided and despised when they were believed to be the inventions of past centuries, appear praiseworthy when they appear in the name of men who are famous in our days” (III, p. 543).

**4.1.4.4** The method adopted by Tiraboschi in compiling his *Storia* is typical of the eighteenth-century scholar. Nothing is missing from this great historiographical excursus: classification, annotation, the indication of sources, critical or simply scholarly discussion, appendices and complementary essays, catalogues of editions, synthetic and analytic indices, not to mention once again the vast scale of the plan and the general organisation of the work. The treatment progresses systematically, moving from the “means used to aid study” (among which are mentioned the patronage of the ruling class, university and academic institutions, public schools, libraries, museums and, finally, reports of the journeys undertaken by explorers and navigators throughout the centuries) to the “sciences” (which include philosophy), and, finally “*belles-lettres* and the arts”. The history of the various disciplines in the different periods is structured in a uniform manner, beginning with a general presentation, never without its value judgements, then moving on to the individual personalities who were notable in the various sciences and arts. Together with cultural history, taken in its broadest sense, there is always a ‘biographical history’ and a presentation of the works of the individual writers or artists. Sources are, moreover, supported not only by bibliography but above all by ancient and modern historiography, upon which much of the historical narration rests.

Properly speaking, Tiraboschi does not seem to want to provide “a philosophical outline” (as was the fashion in the eighteenth century) but, to use his own words, “an exact history” (I, p. 272). Hence his *Storia* has a philological and narrative approach, aiming at a ‘reconstruction’ rather than an ‘interpretation’. He explicitly states that he is writing for the “erudite” man of learning (II, p. 418), certainly not for the uneducated man, and not even, it seems, for the philosopher of history. He himself appeals to the “erudite” not to fall into “tiresome repetition” (III, p. 388). At times, as a man of erudition, he regrets that he has not been “able to see” everything that has been written about a certain subject. “And which is the library”, he laments, “that can boast of having every book?” (II, p. 521). Also as a man of erudition, he feels it necessary “to add” at the end of each tome of his work, in order “not to interrupt the line of narration”, if not exactly “a precise Catalogue of all the editions of the authors

[...] mentioned there”, then at least a list “of some [of them], which, either for their rarity, or for the elegance of the edition, or for the additional comments or for some other aspect, are of greater value” (I, p. 602; cf. also II, p. 292). And again as a man of erudition, aware of the vast amount of material, Tiraboschi is “terrified”. “I have always distrusted myself”, he writes, as his enterprise is drawing to a close, “and I confess that many a time, after setting my hand to work, have I been terrified by the immense extent of the field I have had to cross and by the unbelievable quantity of objects I was given to examine. Therefore, both in the prefaces to the first tomes of my *Storia*, and repeatedly in letters of mine, I have begged for the help of highly learned men so that they might, with the accuracy of their research, correct any errors into which I was well aware I would inevitably fall” (VIII/2, p. ix).

Nonetheless, the thinkers of the “philosophical century” reproached him for this excessively philological spirit, for his erudite concerns and, above all, for his declared intention to be a *historian* and not a *philosopher*. Tiraboschi defended himself in the preface to the second Modenese edition: “I am convinced [...] that truth and exactitude are the first gifts required of a historian, and that reflection and systems tumble to the ground if the facts on which they rest have ruinous or shaky foundations. Therefore, before all else I made an effort to discover the truth and circumstances of the facts, and only then did I draw from them the reflections that seemed to me opportune”. However, even his *Storia* contained that “philosophical outline” that was so beloved of his age: “I would like to flatter myself, that if anyone should remove from my *Storia* all the chronological discussions and the detailed research over which I frequently felt I had to linger, since I was the first to clarify such a vast subject, and he extracted only the essence of the facts, and the consequences I deduced from them, and the general considerations on the state of Literature which I have scattered in various places, he would then perhaps come to form the philosophical outline that to some seems to be lacking in this Work” (I, p. 5).

**4.1.5** The *Storia della letteratura italiana* was highly successful. When the ten tomes were published one after the other in the decade from 1772 to 1782, at surprising speed considering the length of the work, there was no periodical of the time, whether Italian or foreign, that did not strive to produce a series of reviews or “extracts” or “compendia”. As a consequence masterpiece of Italian literary historiography soon became widely known, arousing admiration and consensus but also polemic and criticism, such as that aimed at Tiraboschi by his fellow Spanish Jesuits then living in Italy. Juan Andrés, the author of another great literary history, as we shall shortly see, was the first to oppose Tiraboschi, who had accused the Spanish of corrupting “good taste” in Italy. But the person who gave him most trouble was Father Saverio Lampillas (1731–1810), who “somewhat quixotically”, “defended all Latin writers of Spanish origin” in his *Saggio storico-apologetico della letteratura spagnola*, (Natali, I, p. 388).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup>The polemic between Tiraboschi and Lampillas dragged on at length both in a lively exchange of pamphlets and in the pages of periodicals, particularly those printed in Rome. Cf., for example, the series of reviews that appeared in the ELR, 1778, VII, pp. 245–248, 271–272, 334–335; 1779,

Judging from the great number of reviews, Tiraboschi's *Storia* easily overtook the *Istoria e indole di ogni filosofia* by Buonafede in terms of fame and success. Its success was undoubtedly linked to the fact that this *Storia* was of common interest to all the learned of the time, whether men of letters or historians, scientists or philosophers, artists or antiquarians. This explains the number of editions and reprints that were made, notwithstanding its length and the consequent expense from an editorial point of view. The second edition came out while Tiraboschi was still alive (Modena, 1787–1794), an edition he had edited himself, declaring that he had recognized his “own fault spontaneously”, even before he was “accused of it”, and that he had corrected some errors, inserted some annotations and additions, and enlarged some parts, very frequently following the suggestions of scholars and men of learning from all over Italy. After this second Modenese edition, several others were produced in other Italian cities: we can mention above all the two Venetian editions (1795–1796, 9 tomes in 16 Vols; 1822–1826, 8 tomes in 12 Vols) and also the edition which appeared in the prestigious series “Opere classiche italiane del secolo XVIII” by the Società Tipografica de' Classici Italiani of Milan (1822–1826, 16 Vols in octavo).

The success of Tiraboschi's work can also be seen from the compendia that were made. Let us mention here the French one by Antonio Landi, “adviser and poet to the Court of Russia and Member of the Accademia della Crusca”: *Histoire de la littérature d'Italie*, tirée de l'italien de Mr. Tiraboschi, et abrégée par Antoine Landi (Berne, 1784, 5 Vols), soon after translated into Italian by Gianantonio Moschini (Venice, 1801–1805). Lorenzo Zenoni made another which was published at the very beginning of the nineteenth century: *Storia della letteratura italiana*, del Cav. Abate Girolamo Tiraboschi, compendiata dall' Abate Lorenzo Zenoni (Venice, 1800–1801, 8 tomes). Together with the compendia, we can also mention the “extracts” taken from this *Storia*, such as *La storia della Poesia Italiana, scritta da Girolamo Tiraboschi, tratta dalla sua grand'opera intitolata Storia generale della Letteratura Italiana*, published by T.J. Mathias (London, 1803), 3 Vols (contrary to the title, the work is in English) and the *Geschichte der Künste und Wissenschaften in Italien* (Leipzig, 1777–1781, 3 tomes in 5 Vols), and yet again the many *Lives* of poets, writers, men of letters, artists and scientists taken from Tiraboschi's monumental work.

Tiraboschi's model endured in nineteenth-century historiography, both for its completeness and scholarship and for its methodology. The literary histories by Giambattista Corniani, Giuseppe Maffei, Antonio Lombardi, and many others continually refer to Tiraboschi as a master of the genre and rarely abandon their faithful observance to this masterpiece of Italian literary historiography. Well into the nineteenth century, almost in reply to a wish expressed by Foscolo,<sup>16</sup> Antonio

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VIII, pp. 357–360, 380–384; 1782, XI, pp. 42–43; and also in the MEB, 1781, pp. 275–279; 1782, pp. 105–110.

<sup>16</sup>One of Foscolo's criticisms of Tiraboschi's *Storia* was that it did not deal with “the literary history” of the eighteenth century, the first half of which also contained some “giants of historical



Lombardi wrote a *Storia della letteratura italiana nel secolo XVIII* (Modena, 1827–1830, in 4 tomes), explicitly intending to “continue Italian literary history from the point where Tiraboschi ended his and bring it up to the first lustres of this century”. Lombardi aimed “to follow the tracks he [i.e. Tiraboschi] indicated” in all ways and “to adopt the same order and the same division of the subject matter” (I, p. VII).

Literary critics, however, had some reservations. Ugo Foscolo included this work among those that lacked “a spark of originality and strength of mind”, without any “merits of elegance and eloquence”, and hence which cannot be “models of style and depositaries of the language”. Works of such a nature “do not have any insight which can generalise and illuminate many ideas and many facts at the same time, and they neither benefit nor please readers of a philosophical inclination”. Their authors, he continues, are “late, cold [...] geniuses”, “incapable of rising to the heights of the heavens and interrogating the systems of nature; incapable of shaking, inflaming, and exalting the imagination; incapable of combining facts, philosophy, and eloquence to make the detail in historical narration, and the moral and political truth that depends on it, interesting and enlightening”. In short, for Foscolo, Tiraboschi’s *Storia* might just as well have been called “Well-Ordered and Reasoned Archive of Materials, Chronologies, Documents and Disquisitions at the Service of the Literary History of Italy” (Foscolo, *Intorno ad antiquari e critici*, pp. 301–304).

Giacomo Zanella, a poet, man of letters, and literary historian, maintained more benignly that the work was “tedious to read and we find gathered together in one chapter all the names, for example, of the philosophers that illustrated a century, and not to find the progress or regress that philosophy made at that time” (Zanella, p. 99). Cesare Cantù, one of the major nineteenth-century Italian polygraphs, was no more indulgent. In his own *Storia della letteratura italiana* (Florence, 1865, p. 550) he attacks Tiraboschi from the point of view of the history of ideas: “He gives no information about the writers’ opinions or their merits compared to the period and to other writers, [...] he rarely ventures to make a judgement of his own, quoting much and deciding little, nor does he know how to keep to a middle path between the inevitable omissions in comprehensive works and the prolixity in special research; he scholastically breaks up sciences and authors; he confuses mediocrity with genius, finding all to be great men because he has been assured of this by a panegyrist, a publisher, or an epitaph; to sum up, he has succeeded in doing the opposite to what he had professed, that is, to ‘wish to write about the literature, not about the men of letters of Italy’”.

For his part, Giosuè Carducci speaks of Tiraboschi as a “learned man who promoted Italian doctrine with a perfectly Italian soul”. However, all things considered, Tiraboschi is one of a “dozen names” of the eighteenth century (“no Romans, mostly Jesuits, all false rhetors: rotting bones, embellished with phrases”)

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and antiquarian criticism” (*Intorno ad antiquari e critici*, in *Saggi di letteratura italiana*, Part Two, critical edition by C. Foligno, Firenze, 1958 [Edizione nazionale delle opere di Ugo Foscolo, vol. XI, Part II], p. 304).

who “in the laboured weakness of tiring emphasis reveal the phthisis of faith and the victorious conquest of the devil philosophism that holds them by their hoods” (*Del Risorgimento italiano*, in *Poeti e figure del Risorgimento. Serie prima*, Bologna, 1903, pp. 12–13). Let us lastly observe that Francesco De Sanctis barely mentions his great eighteenth-century predecessor, simply describing Tiraboschi as the “Muratori of our literature” (*Storia della letteratura italiana*, II, p. 343). For Vincenzo Gioberti, on the other hand, who exalted the “moral and civil primacy of the Italians”, Tiraboschi seemed worthy of belonging to “that family of learned Italians” whom “none of his contemporaries in Europe surpassed” (*Del primato morale e civile degli Italiani*, ed. U. Redanò, Milan, 1939, II, p. 103).

**4.1.6** On Tiraboschi’s life and works: BUAM, LVII, pp. 389–391; De Tiplado, II, pp. 347–352; Fabroni, XVI, pp. 242–264; M. Laterza, *Girolamo Tiraboschi. Vita e opere* (Bari, 1921); Sommervogel, VIII, cols 34–48; Suppl. I, cols 269–271.

On the significance of his historiographical work: Natali, I, pp. 386–388; *Critici e storici della poesia e delle arti nel secondo Settecento*, ed. E. Bigi (Milan and Naples, 1960), pp. 561–585; C. Dionisotti, *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana* (Turin, 1967), pp. 25–27; Getto, pp. 77–101; E. Esposito, ‘Dante nella Storia del Tiraboschi’, *L’Alighieri*, X (1969), pp. 62–67; C. Prencipe Di Donna, ‘Ricerche sul Tiraboschi’, *Giornale italiano di filologia*, XXIII (1971), pp. 194–221; E. Raimondi, ‘Letteratura e scienza nella Storia del Tiraboschi’, in *Scienza e letteratura nella cultura Settecento*, pp. 295–309; P. Di Pietro Lombardi, *Girolamo Tiraboschi* (Rimini, 1996); *Girolamo Tiraboschi. Miscellanea di studi*, ed. A.R. Venturi Barbolini (Modena, 1997); M. Mari, *Il genio freddo. La storiografia letteraria di Girolamo Tiraboschi* (Milan, 1999<sup>2</sup>); C. Viola, ‘Tiraboschiana’, *Studi di teoria e storia della letteratura e della critica*, XXI (2000), pp. 113–124; Ph. Simon, ‘Italy and France in Girolamo Tiraboschi’s *Storia della letteratura italiana*’, *Revue des études italiennes*, XLVIII (2002), nos. 3–4, pp. 347–358; Id., ‘Girolamo Tiraboschi faiseur et défaisseur de héros dans la *Storia della letteratura italiana* (1772)’, *Cahiers d’études italiennes*, XV (2012), pp. 199–209; Ricci, *Dal “Brunus redivivus” al Bruno degli Italiani*, pp. 18–20; *Studi su Girolamo Tiraboschi e altre ricerche*, ed. U. Casari (Modena, 2006); Ciliberto, pp. 1937–1938.

Of the many reviews of the *Storia della letteratura italiana*, some of which quoted by Sommervogel, VIII, cols 35 and 37, we can note those that appeared in EL, 1772, March, IV/1, pp. 3–22; August, VI/2, pp. 3–11; 1773, May, III/1, pp. 3–14; JE, 1774, VI/3, pp. 453–466; MT, 1776, I, pp. 275–276; III, pp. 198–202; MEB, 1781, pp. 19–20, 193–200, 212–216; GIL, 1805, X, pp. 76–79.

Of the many eulogies and commemorations of the time, we can merely mention some examples: *Elogio* by Pompilio Pozzetti (1794; cf. MSSLC, 1794, XIV, pp. 61–62; GL, 1794, xcv, pp. 62–75; ELR, 1806, pp. 133–135); by Antonio Lombardi (Modena, 1796; cf. MSSLC, 1796, May, pp. 10–12); by Giuseppe Beltramelli (Bergamo, [1812]; cf. GIL, 1812, XXXIII, pp. 250–257).

## 4.2 Juan Andrés (1740–1817)

### *Dell'origine, de' progressi e dello stato attuale della filosofia*

**4.2.1** The Jesuit Juan Andrés was born in Planes (Alicante), in the province of Valencia, on 15th February, 1740. He received his early religious and cultural education at the college for noblemen, run by the Jesuits, in his native city and at the age of 14 he applied to become a member of the Jesuit Order. He studied philosophy in Genoa and theology in Valencia. In 1767, he was appointed chair of literature at the University of Gandía. The suppression of the Order forced him, like many other Jesuits, to emigrate to Italy, where he was able to continue his studies and teach at university. He held the chair of philosophy in Ferrara, and then, in 1773, he moved to the home of Count Bianchi in Mantua. Thanks to the patronage of this noble family, Juan Andrés was able to frequent the main Italian and German libraries, thus acquiring great learning. Following the expulsion of the French army, the Austrian emperor Francis I appointed him Prefect of Studies at the University of Pavia, a position which he undertook whilst continuing his own research and studies. Following that, he became a librarian in Parma. In 1804, when the Society of Jesus was re-founded in Naples, Juan Andrés went to join his fellow brethren there and took up the public post of “Royal Book Reviser”, also becoming a member of the royal library and rector of the boarding school for noblemen. He stayed in Naples until going to spend his last days with the Jesuits in Rome, where he died on 12th January, 1817.

**4.2.2** Juan Andrés was a very prolific writer not only in the field of the humanities but also in the physical and natural sciences. His works total about 30 titles (cf. Sommervogel, I, pp. 341–350), and show the various interests, at times rather intermittent, that stimulated this eighteenth-century man of learning. Here he is considered mainly for his *Dell'origine, de' progressi e dello stato attuale d'ogni letteratura*, which appeared for the first time in Parma (Stamperia Reale Bodoni), between 1782 and 1799. In seven quarto volumes, Andrés' work embraced the entire development of culture, from belles-lettres to the natural sciences (tomes I–V), and from the ecclesiastic sciences to civil rights (tomes VI–VII). The work, which is undoubtedly Andrés' most significant, was published several times and most of the editions were revised by the author himself. We quote here from the first Venetian edition, published from 1783 to 1800 by the printers Giovanni Vito and Pietro Zerletti (22 tomes in 27 vols). Within this whole, which is of an encyclopaedic nature, typical of the Enlightenment, Book 3 (tome XV of the edition used here) consists of a general history of philosophy, where the author gradually traces the development of philosophy from its Barbarian origins to its modern achievements. But the work also contains (in tome XVI) a “history of moral philosophy”, which, again starting with its Barbarian origins, and moving through Greek, Roman, medieval, and Renaissance philosophy, arrives at the French *philosophes*. The chapter ‘On Jurisprudence’ also contains a highly historical treatment, covering many aspects of the history of philosophy. However, what makes the whole work

very similar to the historiography of philosophy is the unity of the encyclopaedic design that inspires it throughout, from the very first pages of the first volume, devoted to the “state of literature in the different ages”, a kind of template for interpreting the different ‘literary histories’, including that of philosophy.

Besides this comprehensive work, which rivalled Tiraboschi’s in Italy, Andrés wrote another book that is worthy of note from the point of view of philosophy and its history: the *Saggio della filosofia del Galileo* (Mantova, 1776), which describes Galileo’s merits in the scientific and philosophical fields with great insight and singular objectivity. The rest of Andrés’ literary output is devoted to various subjects of a scientific nature; we can cite, for example, a dissertation presented at the Mantua Academy in reply to a question set by the Academy, asking “the reason why water, when rising in jets in almost vertical vases, never reaches the level of the reservoir if the openings of the jets are rather small, and the smaller the opening, the lower the jet” (Mantova, 1775). There is also the more general *Dissertazione sopra le cagioni della scarsezza de’ progressi delle scienze* (Ferrara, 1779); while other works are more literary or concern topics of a scholarly nature, mainly the result of exhaustive library research, such as the *Catalogo de’ codici manoscritti di casa Capilupi di Mantova* (1797), as well as the large correspondence, which was even translated into Castilian: *Cartas familiares* (Madrid, 2004); *Epistolario de Juan Andrés y Morell (1740–1817)*, ed. L. Brunori (Valencia, 2006), 3 vols; see also *Lettere familiari. Corrispondenza di viaggio dall’Italia del Settecento*, ed. M. Fabbri (Rimini, 2008–2011), 5 vols.

**4.2.3** “The aims of philosophy are to seek truth and virtue, direct the intellect and will, regulate reason and customs, contemplate and act”: it is with this definition, modelled on traditional concepts mainly taken from scholastic authors, that Juan Andrés opens the treatise devoted to the origins, progress and “present state” of philosophical literature. By this same definition, philosophy is also classified into “theoretical and practical”, or “contemplative and active”, adjectives that the author prefers to substitute with those of “rational” philosophy and “moral” philosophy, to which he then devotes separate treatises. The object of “rational” philosophy is “all nature, God, men, spirits and bodies, heaven and earth and the entire world”. In this conception, therefore, physics comes to play “a very central role in philosophy”. But Andrés had already dealt with physics in Book 2, so he restricts the field of rational philosophy “to those meditations that most closely concern the use of our reason”, “to the natural disquisitions that are not founded on experiences and observations but only on reasoning”, “to metaphysics”, and finally “to logic”. Ethics and jurisprudence (which he defines as “the morals of nations”) are hence excluded from rational philosophy and are dealt with separately. This is the field in which he will examine “the history of the progress of philosophy” (p. 2).

The restrictions that Andrés imposes by his definition of philosophy, however, are not always respected in the course of his vast treatment, since he frequently likes to characterize philosophy by that ‘experimentalism’, to a great extent inspired by Galileo, which maintained that the horizons of the consciousness were extended by the observation of nature and the investigation into physics. Thus he states several times that “there can be no good philosophy” without “the love of experiments and

observations” (p. 78). All philosophers, both ancient and modern, are judged in the light of this principle. Leibniz’s limitations, for example, consist in his having created “a work of reason or of the imagination rather than of experiments and observations” (p. 242). “In vain does one hope to rediscover truth”, Andrés states, in conclusion to his history of philosophy, “when there are no experiments and observations”: only “ingenious ratiocinations and guesses can be obtained” (p. 274).

Besides physics, theodicy also concurs significantly with the definition of philosophy, since “the sublimest philosophy” consists precisely of “that which concerns God and spirits, of which the senses tell us nothing” (p. 14). This is demonstrated in the entire history of philosophy from its early beginnings, by the fact that it is strongly characterized by theistic and religious problematics. But over and above all, philosophy is “novelty”, “freedom of thought”, “progress”, as stated in the title of this comparative literary history. There is no philosophy in the monotonous repetition of what others have said, which was, for example, what the Romans did, simply popularizing what the Greeks had elaborated. Thus the Middle Ages came to an end only when “some began to think for themselves” (p. 205). And Descartes is a great thinker because he “bravely dared to form a new philosophy himself, while Gassendi was modestly content to re-establish Epicurean philosophy correctly, augmented with new lights” (p. 224). But against this “freedom and novelty of thought” there is always the warning of the Fathers, and of Jerome in particular, that Andrés, a faithful man of the Church, fervently embraces: “Reason and philosophy will be a very safe guide for sober, enlightened men, who are able to recognise their limits; but for independent and proud spirits they are a dazzling fascination, a dangerous incantation seeking to exceed its rights only to abuse them” (pp. 256–257).

#### **4.2.4 *Dell’origine, de’ progressi e dello stato attuale della filosofia***

**4.2.4.1** Andrés’ history of philosophy is found, as we have said, within the more general history of “all literature”, precisely in the “second part of natural sciences” (Book 3). Specifically, rational and moral philosophy, with the addition of jurisprudence, is dealt with after ‘physics’ (chemistry, botany, natural history, anatomy, and medicine). Andrés considers the philosophical disciplines as part of the general organisation of the sciences, the first part of which includes the mathematical disciplines (arithmetic, algebra, geometry, mechanics, hydrostatics, nautical science, optics, and astronomy). By placing philosophy among the sciences in this way we seem to see the typically Cartesian desire to make philosophy equal to the so-called exact sciences, and the mathematical sciences in particular.

The historical treatment devoted to rational or contemplative philosophy occupies all of tome XV in the first Venetian edition, for a total of 275 pages in octavo. It is preceded by the ‘Index of Chapters’ (pp. III–VIII) and by a brief, untitled

introduction in which Andrés illustrates his concept of philosophy, which is closely linked, as we have seen, to physical and naturalist interests. The account then begins with a description of the origins of philosophy among the ancient peoples (the Chaldeans, Persians, and Egyptians), which Andrés does not linger on at length, preferring to move on to the developments of Greek philosophy. The titles listed in the Index are repeated and placed in the margins of the text, without any numbering or interruption in the text, giving the impression of a continuum from start to finish, in which the history of philosophy moves seamlessly from Barbarian to Greek, from Greek to Arabic and medieval Latin, from the Renaissance to the modern, and then to the ‘Enlightened’ days of the eighteenth century. There are very few footnotes, mainly consisting of indications of sources or references to other sections of the work.

**4.2.4.2** The periods into which Andrés divides his history of philosophy are the usual ones: the Barbarian, Greek, Roman, medieval, and modern. However, it is possible to see how he personalizes his treatment by abandoning old frameworks of temporal division or by placing greater or lesser emphasis on this or that period. The space given over to pre-Greek philosophy, the so-called Barbarian era, on which so many learned men of the seventeenth century liked to dwell (think of the *Antiquitates Barbaricae philosophiae* by Heurnius: cf. *Models*, I, pp. 106–113), for example, is almost non-existent. Yet this is the first period of the history of philosophy for Andrés too, the age of its origins, mainly characterized by cosmological and theogonic themes. To avoid “erudite prolixity”, the author immediately moves on to examining “the beginning of natural philosophy”, which was “then followed by the famous Greek schools, which was then passed on to the Romans, and reached our philosophers, which is the one that is now known to all by the name of philosophy” (p. 6).

Greek philosophy constitutes the second period of the history of philosophy, characterized by enquiry into the constitution and nature of the physical world. “Thales, one of the famous seven wise men of Greece, was the true father of this natural philosophy, and Miletus, where he established his school, can be considered the cradle of the same”. “It was indeed Thales who was the first to attempt to establish a real, physical principle” (p. 6). While the Ionic school originated with Thales in Greece, the Pythagorean school originated with Pythagoras in Italy. “The Ionic school tried more specifically to explain the work of nature in the formation of the universe through natural bodies, and hence distinctly obtained the name of physics; the Italic school preferred abstract meditation and spiritual contemplation, and could thus be called specifically theological, or metaphysical” (pp. 19–20). “But [...] little by little those sects died out, and new ones were born” (p. 22), which for Andrés can be reduced to four: the Academic, the Peripatetic, the Stoic, and the Epicurean. These four schools, he states, “are the main ones, indeed one may say the only ones, within which the whole of ancient philosophy was contained, since the two sects, the Sceptic and the Eclectic, which are frequently mentioned when speaking of ancient philosophers, can only improperly be called philosophical sects. The Sceptic should have been called anti-philosophical rather than philosophical, and far from enlarging and embellishing the lights of philosophy did nothing but

obscure and extinguish them: its dogmas, if it had any at all, were reduced to not believing in any dogma, but opposing all those of other philosophers, and to withholding judgement and doubting everything” (pp. 110–111). The Eclectic, on the other hand, with Potamon of Alexandria, developed later than ancient philosophy, when, that is, “the ancient sects of Greek philosophy” had died out (p. 120). The numerous other philosophical schools, whose names frequently recur in the sources of ancient historiography, and above all in Laertius’ *Lives*, derive from the four main ones mentioned above. Even the Eleatic school itself, founded by Xenophanes, contemporary with the two schools that were the fathers of all Greek philosophy, the Ionic and the Italic, and almost their antagonist, “may be considered an offshoot of the Italic sect” (p. 12).

In Andrés’ treatment, the history of Roman philosophy does not have a proper division into periods since it was closely linked to the developments of Greek philosophy, which the Romans merely popularized with no originality of their own. The transition from the period of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy to that of the Middle Ages took place through Alexandrian philosophy and the Eclectic school that flourished within it. The Middle Ages in turn are not divided into well-defined periods characterized by homogeneous movements of thought. The thousand years of the Middle Ages are seen in a rather uniform way, in a historical development that lacked any points of rupture. Philosophers and philosophical currents follow one another indistinctly, century after century, in an narrative that lumps them all together and employs a predominantly negative tone. Arabs and Latin Scholastics, rather than originating clearly defined periods in the history of philosophy, are like actors with walk-on parts on the philosophical stage of this long epoch, symbols of a pointless and captious philosophy, foreign to the naturalistic enquiries that would instead contribute a great deal to the development of philosophy.

Petrarch was “the first to give an impetus to the good cultivation of philosophy” (p. 198). With him a new period began, which was to see Humanist and Renaissance scholars engage in the “restoration” of philosophy after the medieval period. Galileo was then to be “the first to give a correct example of correct way of philosophizing”. He marked “the dawn of good philosophy”, which the great Francis Bacon had already anticipated. This is the start of modern philosophy, and its development had not yet come to a conclusion in the century of the Enlightenment (p. 214).

**4.2.4.3** In Juan Andrés’ account of the history of philosophy there are a number of recurrent, notable historiographical theses, which, together with the concept of philosophy that has been described, constitute the theoretical canvas on which the author gradually elaborates his *Storia*. Firstly, Andrés believes that philosophy and its history are in a state of continual progress, which is a theme, as announced in the title, that might seem at first sight to belong to seventeenth-century taste. In reality, in Juan Andrés, the theme of progress clearly belongs to the Enlightenment. ‘Progress’ for the author is equivalent to ‘new’, a category that acts in its Enlightenment sense as a synonym of happiness, individual and social well-being, knowledge of the secrets of nature, and full control over the forces of the physical world. Philosophers are evaluated, in this perspective, for anything new they have introduced, each one contributing, in his own way, to the progress and

well-being of humanity in the various stages of its history. Thus the Romans were the worst philosophers of all because they did not know how to elaborate original doctrines and were content, “generally”, to “hear philosophers amuse themselves in subtle discourses and learn useful precepts, which is really the true fruit of philosophy, but they moved indifferently from the teachings of Antiochus to those of Phaedrus, Cratippus and others, from the Stoics to the Epicureans, from the Peripatetics to the Academics, more out of a spirit of curiosity, which wants to see everything, than out of philosophical critique, which goes back to principles, weighs them up and evaluates them, and wishes to distinguish what is true from what is false, eager only to acquire cognition, not to promote systems, to please their own taste, not to convince or satisfy reason, and to become erudite men rather than philosophers”. Despite the fact that he “touched on the sublimest and most noblest subjects of philosophy” and knew how to explain “the doctrine of many philosophers with more energy and clarity than they themselves had done”, even Cicero “did not take it upon himself to meditate on his own, and present new and original ideas about the subjects dealt with, and link them to one another in such a way as to form a body of philosophy” (pp. 124–126).

All Scholasticism is judged negatively, therefore, because it was merely repetitive or popularist, reordering others’ ideas, and this judgement not only concerns what was by then defined as Scholastic *par excellence*, namely the medieval Latin current of thought, but also Aristotelian, Platonist, Alexandrian, and Arabic Scholasticism. Philosophy was reborn when it started to “follow its own reason”, “to think for itself”, “to produce original systems”, and “to create a new philosophy from its own roots”. This is what the Humanist and Renaissance thinkers tried to do, even if they did not fully succeed in their intentions. Indeed, the enterprise they undertook after the medieval barbarities was “too arduous and difficult, or, to put it better, even impossible, for those times alone and even more for those minds”. “What philosophy, indeed, could one expect from impatient and restless men who allowed themselves to be led by the brilliant sparks of their fervid imagination without stopping to consult their reason? What was needed was first to observe much, to meditate much, to reflect much, to compare, examine, ponder, set out facts, establish some truths, combine them with one another and to see their relationships, broaden their views and rise to other, more universal, no less certain ones, link them together, turn them around to see and reconsider them from all sides with a critical eye, weigh them up over and over again with an enlightened and severe judgement and find them fully coherent and united in harmonious unity, and then form a system from them, set this out methodically, establish it with the strength and solidity of reasons, foresee and refute objections to it, and present it for universal instruction, clear and pleasing, noble and rich, firm and sure” (pp. 210–211).

The extract quoted above contains the second historiographical theory of Andrés’ treatise. Philosophy becomes new and original above all when it arises from “observing much”. Progress in philosophy originates particularly from the observation of nature. True philosophy was born when Thales turned his investigation to the “real, physical principle” of nature (p. 6), and, every time this perspective was ignored in research, philosophy turned into “metaphysical subtleties” (p. 172),



“vagaries and groundless subtleties” (p. 204), “low, vulgar subtleties” (p. 181), and “clamorous chattering” (p. 162), like that of the Scholastics, Aristotelians, and Arabs in the Middle Ages. Aristotle, who was still considered to be “a marvel of genius and doctrine”, “one of the vastest and sublimest geniuses that mankind can vaunt”, he who “alone had the noble courage to present us with a complete picture of all the general and particular views of nature, and to shape a full and complete course of all philosophy”, ended up by “contemplating remote and abstract things” and by “preferring general theories to particular cognition”, vainly chasing “metaphysical reasons” and “useless speculations” (pp. 41 and 47–48). “We all now agree”, the author polemically observes, “that it is necessary first to know facts, then to seek their causes, and that from the cognition of particulars one must rise to an examination of general rules” (p. 48).

With the philosophy of nature, therefore, comes the exaltation of the modern (Cartesian, but above all Baconian and Galilean) method of research in the philosophical field which the Enlightenment had made its own, above all in the programmatic *Preliminary Discourse* to the *Encyclopédie*. The limitations of Aristotle’s thought and method became even greater in the Peripatetic schools in particular, which imposed a “servile subjection” and a “blind respect and attachment” “which prevented for so many centuries [ . . . ] all progress in philosophy” (p. 79). This also occurred in the Alexandrian school and the Eclectic sect that flourished there, giving rise to a “fanatical and enthusiastic philosophy”. The works of these philosophers, particularly those of Plotinus, are full “of subtleties, imaginary and merely ideal reasons, theurgic theories, superstitious practices, evocations, and apparitions, ecstasies, divinations, anile fables, and vain beliefs”. In sum, Alexandrian philosophy “prepares us for the coarseness and barbarities of the philosophy in the following centuries” and “leads us to the vagaries and cavils of the Scholastics” (pp. 159–161).

The Arab thinkers also lost sight of the good philosophy of nature nourished by observations and experiments, occupying themselves instead, as is the case of the philosopher al-Kindī, for example, “with predicaments and universals, remarks on Sophist art and on dialectical arguments, with commentaries on and illustrations of the *Organon*, the *Analytics*, and other books of logic by Aristotle”. Indeed, it was al-Kindī himself who introduced “among the Muslims a taste for philosophy, which was then increasingly taken further, and which increasingly paved way for the reign of Scholasticism”. And like al-Kindī, al-Fārābī, “the prince of Mohammedan philosophers”, “occupied himself too much with metaphysical subtleties and with dialectical cavils”. All the Arab thinkers, therefore, ended up by employing “their studies and the keenness of their minds in subtleties and cavils, but brought more damage than aid to philosophy”. “Logics, introductions to logic, compendia of logic, treatises on the categories, on propositions, on definitions, on the inferences of syllogisms, commentaries, and logical writings of all manner were the fruit of their philosophical meditations” (pp. 169–174).

Heir to this way of considering philosophy was medieval Scholasticism, “so greatly deprecated by everyone” (p. 162), and in general the whole medieval period of a thousand years. Instead of philologically promoting the culture inherited from

Roman and Christian classicism, the thinkers of the late Middle Ages elaborated philosophical doctrines that generated only “theological errors” and “philosophical vanities”. Meanwhile, in the schools “an eristic spirit and the love of dialectical and metaphysical subtleties” developed. “The ambition to distinguish themselves led philosophers to raise subtle questions, and to seek fame in difficult trifles and in intricate and laborious trivialities. Like the philosophy of those schools, everything was reduced to dialectics, those who rose to greater fame as philosophers were those who made most noise with dialectical subtleties”. Furthermore, on the basis of John of Salisbury’s testimony, Andrés writes: “They spent many, not ten, not twenty years, but their whole lives on logic, and still, when old-age weakens the body, blunts the sharpness of the mind and the senses, and mortifies the spirit of pleasure, there was only logic on their tongue or in their hands, which removes all time and desire for any other study” (pp. 180–181).

But if the Scholasticism of the early period was lost in “dialectical cavils” – and here we have above all the question of the “nature of universals”, “the famous prize for which all philosophers took up arms” (p. 182) – the Scholasticism of the age of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas did not lead to any further progress in philosophy. The greatest work of the philosophers of this age consisted of “purging and sanctifying Aristotle’s works”. Thomas Aquinas, in particular, wanted to make Aristotle’s works “an entire course of philosophy, which was to serve as preliminary to the study of theology”, thus “removing from the hands of heretics those Aristotelian weapons with which they had reinforced their errors”. “Since he was fully immersed in theological meditation, and solely guided in philosophical matters by Aristotle and his commentators, mainly Arabs, he could not produce any great discoveries, nor make in philosophy the progress of a Descartes or a Leibniz” (pp. 188–189).

The thirteenth century is defined as “long-winded and empty”, when “Aristotle and all his train of Arabic commentators were held in much greater veneration”, when “dialectics and metaphysical questions grew”, and “specifications, distinctions, formalities and all the baggage of Scholastic barbarianism were multiplied” (pp. 189–192). Aquinas and Scotus, Peter of Spain and Ockham, Buridan and Gregory of Rimini, Thomists, Scotists, and Ockhamists, and then their modern descendants, the Suarezists and the Conimbricenses, as a single group are all criticised. Some philosophers in the Middle Ages, however, “considered philosophy in a better light” (p. 196). They were John of Salisbury, Albert the Great, Alfonso X, Brunetto Latini, Vincent of Beauvais, Roger Bacon, Ramon Lull, Arnaldus de Villanova and, finally, the great Petrarch. They knew how to direct their research towards nature or “explained eloquence and erudition” (p. 198), opposing the “barbaric style” of the Scholastics.

Andrés’ harsh criticism of the Scholastic Middle Ages and its descendants further highlights the exaltation of modern philosophy that inspires the entire work. It is in the modern age that physics made extraordinary progress. “The advantage of modern philosophy over the ancient consists mainly, and one might almost say solely, in the improvement of physics; and the progress that we have seen in physics by Galileo, Bacon, and Descartes are the advances they made in

philosophy" (pp. 212–213). In the modern age, philosophy rediscovered its ancient, original vocation, replacing "ratiocination and guesswork" with "experiments" and "observations" (p. 274). There were many protagonists in this renewal, but significance is placed particularly on Gassendi, Malebranche, Genovesi, Bonnet, and Locke. Gassendi is seen to rival Descartes: "I do not know", writes Andrés, "which of these two philosophers to prefer" (p. 223). It is certain that in physics, Gassendi "was able to form a clearer and more intelligible doctrine, less subject to very serious challenges" (p. 226). Malebranche is defined as "Descartes' most worthy partisan, the father of true logic, and of sound and useful metaphysics" (p. 230). Locke is considered "the father of a, so to speak, experimental metaphysics", "the Newton of rational philosophy" (p. 236); Bonnet is "the metaphysician", "the great philosopher" of his time (p. 245), and again "the great thinker", "the supreme philosopher", "the only one to be placed in the company of Locke and Condillac, to fashion a course of practical and useful metaphysics" (p. 212); Genovesi is the true "reformer of Italian philosophy", while "disputes" and "Peripatetic aridity" persisted in the schools (pp. 259–260).

Appreciation is, however, frequently interspersed with criticism, with the aim of tempering some highly positive, if not to say enthusiastic, opinions scattered throughout the work. When Andrés comes to the final pages of his treatment and speaks of the modern philosophers he had praised for various reasons, he observes: "Descartes and Malebranche added too fanciful an imagination to some useful truths; Leibniz, Clarke, Collins, and their likes lingered too long over excessively subtle speculations, in which it is unlikely one will ever attain any evident certainty; Wolff and Genovesi still preserved a tinge of Scholasticism, and also spent their time on unresolvable questions that were so dear to their predecessors" (pp. 272–273). The criticism becomes even more explicit when Andrés comes to speak of the errors of the moderns, above all of those who threatened the Catholic religion and the principles of natural ethics. Andrés sees "libertinism of thought" in Giordano Bruno and Vanini (p. 251); and "Pyrrhonism" and "impiety" in Pierre Bayle (p. 250); he judges modern encyclopedism to be "superficial, and full of errors, shallow philosophy, and insecure erudition [...] in many articles" (p. 197); and the "philosophasters" of his time as "irreligious". He further complains: "Unfortunately [...] religion and humanity have received no blows more ruinous than those delivered by the people who always seek to spew out philosophy, and pride themselves so haughtily on being philosophers; and the name of philosophy is at their mercy, a name once so highly esteemed and respected is now heard with disdain and abomination by wise and honest people" (p. 133). The history of philosophy, on the contrary, has testified to the universal belief in God since the time of the most ancient peoples: "Generally, everyone recognized and admitted a superior and divine Being, on whom the formation and preservation of the entire mechanism of the universe depends"; "all people knew and in their hearts embraced a true God" (p. 17). Andrés had also written previously: "In short, all the teachings of the ancient philosophers tended towards the knowledge of God and the spirits and the creation of the world, and the Lord's works, and towards religion, theology, and

metaphysics. The ancients' physics itself was nothing but a deduction from these principles" (p. 4).

**4.2.4.4** As we have already noted, the extensive treatise *Dell'origine, de' progressi e dello stato attuale della filosofia* is a single narrative that runs continuously from start to finish, containing no subdivisions except for the titles of the chapters in the margins. The choice of such a treatment is perhaps justified by the fact that this history was an integral part of a larger comparative literary history, and it was not convenient to interrupt the general structure of the whole work with further internal subdivisions within the individual treatises. Further methodological choices, such as the absence of the passionate scholarship that characterized much of eighteenth-century literary production, are linked to the final aim of the work. Few historical sources and very few historiographical ones (Brucker) are quoted. Andrés does not adopt a fixed method of describing the major philosophers (life, works, doctrines etc.), but generally illustrates the thought of each of them in close connection with their biography, as is the case, for example, of the extensive treatment reserved for Aristotle (pp. 36–58).

Andrés' historiography is full of critical observations which clearly reflect his own ideas. Thus, in the section devoted to Aristotle, praise alternates with criticism and lively comparisons with the ideological standpoints of the century of the Enlightenment. After speaking of the Stagirite's "great yearning for knowledge" and his eager attendance of Plato's school, Andrés comments: "Here we must note a considerable difference between the studies of the Ancients and those of our time. Our young men would be ashamed to rush to school, however famous their masters may be and however capable they are of giving them greater instruction, for even one day more than those established by custom, or by law; and far from wanting to continue to be schoolboys, they cannot wait to leave school and become doctors, while the Ancients, even in old age, submitted themselves voluntarily for years and years to the discipline of their masters, and desirous more to learn than to teach, willingly bore the troublesome labour and petty humiliations to which pupils are subjected" (pp. 38–39).

**4.2.5** Today a comparative history of universal literature by a single author might seem pretentious, but Andrés' work was not considered as such by the men of learning in the eighteenth century. In fact it was greatly appreciated, if one is to judge from the numerous reviews the work had in the periodicals of the time (cf. Sommervogel, I, col. 344). Not only did it have a wider perspective than Tiraboschi's work, but it also contrasted with the latter from a methodological point of view, above all as far as the classification of knowledge and its relative historiography are concerned. Andrés' work was the kind of 'literary encyclopaedia' to be found in all libraries in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. We know that there was also a copy in Leopardi's house and that the poet consulted it systematically.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Cf. S. Battaglia, 'La dottrina linguistica del Leopardi', in *Leopardi e il Settecento. Atti del I Convegno internazionale di studi leopardiani* (Florence, 1964), pp. 38–39.

Andrés' work was successful not only in Italy, where it was conceived and published, but also in France and obviously in Spain, the author's native country, where it was soon translated: *Histoire générale des sciences et de la littérature depuis les temps antérieurs à l'histoire grecque jusqu'à nos jours*, traduite de l'italien avec des additions, des suppléments et des notes par J.-E. Ortolani (Paris, 1805, tome I only); *Origen, progresos y estado actual de toda la literatura, traducida al castellano por D. Carlos Andrés* (Madrid, 1784–1806; ed. J. Garcia Gabaldon, Madrid, 1997). In Germany, August W. Schlegel turned to it when compiling his *Über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* (1809); Johann Heinrich Martin Ernesti, a late eighteenth-century German man of letters, mentions it in his history of philosophy alongside Morhof's *Polyhistor*, Fabricius' *Bibliotheca* and Denina's *Vicende della letteratura*, all authors of general histories of literature in some sense (Ernesti, p. 6). The work continued to be reprinted and republished in new editions well into the nineteenth century by printers in various Italian cities (Venice, 1783–1800; Prato, 1806–1812; Rome, 1808–1817; Pistoia, 1818; Pisa, 1821 and 1829; Venice, 1830–1834; Naples, 1836; Venice, 1844).

As had also been the case with Tiraboschi's *Storia della letteratura italiana*, this work by Andrés was frequently condensed or partly reproduced in extracts, constituting short histories of literature either of single countries or of a single discipline. Let us mention here only the series of compendia that the Jesuit Alessio Narbone published in Palermo between 1818 and 1846.<sup>18</sup> It was Andrés himself who gave Narbone this idea since he realized that his "history" was ill-suited for schools. The result was a collection of about ten small manageable books in 12°, one for each discipline. The *Prospetto generale* (Palermo, 1818) was followed in 1836 by the *Storia d'ogni poesia* and then, following on from one another, from 1839 to 1846, the universal histories of eloquence, philology, mathematics, physics, philosophy, theology, the Bible, canon law, the Church, and religion. This was a successful collection of scientific and literary histories, in which the compiler gradually became an author himself by adding, modifying, rewriting, annotating and even composing *ex novo* some parts that were not to be found in Andrés' work.

However, after this success, the work received some less positive judgements from later nineteenth century critics, in particular Carducci. "Andrés [...] a presumptuous friar", Carducci writes, "who wants to embrace all human culture; even if on a few occasions he might say correct things, he has very many inaccuracies and errors: he judges abruptly and hastily, often without reason and without cognition; of partly French partly academic taste; a despiser of what is truly great, a polisher of mediocrity; he has an atrocious language and style".<sup>19</sup> Indeed,

<sup>18</sup>On Alessio Narbone (1789–1860) cf. Sommervogel, V, cols 1575–1576, and I. Carini, *Sulla vita e sulle opere del p. Alessio Narbone d. C. d. G.. Discorso letto alla Palermitana Accademia di sc. e lett.* (Naples, 1886); on the compendia of Andrés' work, see pp. 13–14 and 18–20.

<sup>19</sup>*Una lettera del Carducci all'amico C. Gargioli (1860)*, in A. Lombroso, *Miscellanea carducciana* (Bologna, 1911), pp. 186–187. Carducci mentions Andrés again in the essay *Del Risorgimento italiano* (in *Poeti e figure del Risorgimento*, first series, Bologna 1903 [edizione nazionale, vol. XVIII], p. 13). Here he speaks of the "numerous and industrious Spanish colony"

according to such criticism, this work embraced too wide a field to be fully mastered by the author. Natali observes with objectivity: “Intellectualism or philosophism makes him confuse letters and sciences, place almost exclusively importance on the scientific content, and judge the seventeenth century to be ‘the golden age of letters’ (that is of sciences), and seek in it the ‘birth of modern literature’”. “Notwithstanding”, he continues, “one cannot but admire the bold design, the vast learning, although not always first-hand, and the lively, colourful style, even if incorrect. Certainly Andrés’ erudition is of no use to us as we can turn to specific works for any topic: yet Andrés may be consulted usefully for certain particular questions, such as the one on the origins of rhymed poetry in the West” (Natali, I, pp. 388–389).

**4.2.6** On his life and works: *Necrologia di Andrés Giovanni*, GIL, XLIX (1819), pp. 169–171; G. Baraldi, ‘Notizia biografica sul P. Giovanni Andrés’, *Memorie di religione, di morale e di letteratura*, 1824, VI, pp. 451–473; BUAM, II, pp. 371–373; BUAM Suppl., LVI, pp. 293–296; De Tipaldo, IV, pp. 262–264; Sommervogel, I, cols 341–350; DBI, III, pp. 155–157; G. Diaz Diaz, *Hombres y documentos de la filosofía española*, vol. I: A-B (Madrid, 1980), pp. 293–296.

On the significance of his work: V. Cian, ‘L’emigrazione dei Gesuiti Spagnuoli letterati in Italia’, *Memorie della R. Accademia delle scienze di Torino*, serie II, t. XLV, Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche (Turin, 1896), pp. 1–66; C. Pighetti, ‘Un gesuita difensore del Galilei’, *Archives internationales d’histoire des sciences*, XV (1962), pp. 285–290; Natali, I, pp. 388–389 and 435; G.E. Mazzeo, *The Abate Juan Andrés, literary historian of the 18th century* (New York, 1965); M. Batllori, *La cultura hispano-italiana de los jesuitas expulsos: españoles, hispano-americanos, filipinos, 1767–1814* (Madrid, 1966), pp. 531–535; M.F. Sciacca, ‘Giovanni Andrés e la filosofia italiana’, in Id., *Studi sulla filosofia moderna* (Milan, 1968<sup>4</sup>), pp. 407–421; A. Mestre Sanchís, *Humanismo y crítica histórica en los ilustrados alicantinos* (Alicante, 1980), pp. 135–156; V. Navarro Brotons, ‘Juan Andrés y la historia de las ciencias’, in *El científico español ante su historia. La ciencia en España entre 1750–1850* (Madrid, 1980), pp. 73–84; M.E. Soriano Pérez-Villamil, *España vista por historiadores y viajeros italianos* (Madrid, 1980), pp. 47–74 (‘C. Denina y J. Andrés’); Schneider, pp. 140–141; J. Checa Beltrán, ‘Poesía y filosofía: Juan Andrés y el “estilo espiritoso”’, *Revista de literatura*, LIX (1997), pp. 423–435; F. Arato, ‘Un comparatista: Juan Andrés’, *Cromohs*, V (2000), pp. 1–14; *Los jesuitas españoles expulsos. Su imagen y su contribución al saber sobre el mundo hispánico en la Europa del siglo XVIII*, M. Tietz and O. Briesemlister eds. (Madrid and Frankfurt a.M., 2001); E. D’Andrea, ‘Fra letteratura e storia: la cultura di Antico Regime nelle *Cartas familiares* di Juan Andrés’, *Annali di Ca’ Foscari*. Serie Occidentale, XLIV (2005), nos. 1–2, pp. 147–171; R. M. Dainotto, ‘The Discreet Charm of the Arabist Theory: Juan Andrés, Historicism, and the De-Centering of

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that “became Italian, dealing ingeniously in Italian with criticism, history, the theatre, and music”; nonetheless, Carducci’s subsequently judgement of the Spanish Jesuits who immigrated to Italy, and all the members of the Society of Jesus in general, is highly negative.

Montesquieu's Europe', *European History Quarterly*, XXXVI (2006), no. 1, pp. 7–29; Id., 'Of the Arab Origin of Modern Europe: Giammaria Barbieri, Juan Andrés, and the Origin of Rhyme', *Comparative Literature*, 2006, pp. 271–292; N. Guasti, *L'esilio italiano dei gesuiti spagnoli: identità, controllo sociale e pratiche culturali, 1767–1798* (Rome, 2006); N. Guasti, 'Rasgos del exilio italiano de los jesuitas españoles', *Hispania sacra*, LXI (2009), pp. 257–278; *La presenza in Italia dei gesuiti iberici espulsi: aspetti religiosi, politici, culturali*, U. Baldini and G.P. Brizzi eds. (Bologna, 2010).

Reviews of the work *Dell'origine, de' progressi e dello stato attuale d'ogni letteratura*: to the reviews pointed out in Sommervogel, I, col. 344, we add those that appeared in GLI, 1794, IV, pp. 423–424; GL, 1783, LI, pp. 100–139; 1786, LXII, pp. 153–193; 1787, LXVI, pp. 238–271; LXVII, pp. 3–43; LXVIII, pp. 176–238; 1788, LXIX, pp. 54–103; LXX, pp. 172–225; LXXI, pp. 78–112; LXXII, pp. 192–236; 1789, LXXIII, pp. 215–246; 1790, LXXX, pp. 49–103; 1791, LXXXI, pp. 18–80; LXXXII, pp. 138–178; LXXXIV, pp. 141–164; 1792, LXXXV, pp. 106–121; 1794, XCV, pp. 234–266; XCVI, pp. 61–99; 1795, XCVII, pp. 54–95; XCVIII, pp. 3–52; XCIX, pp. 3–64; C, pp. 26–56; 1796, CI, pp. 137–172; GLN, 1795, June, XXIX, pp. 36–77; August, XXXII, pp. 30–59; October, XXXVII, pp. 38–81; November, XXXIX, pp. 74–95; December, XL, pp. 3–31; XLI, pp. 11–31; 1796, January, XLIII, pp. 3–34; March, XLVI, pp. 3–40; April, XLIX, pp. 8–32; June, LIII, pp. 24–45; July, LIV, pp. 47–68; August, LVII, pp. 52–75; September, LVIII, pp. 3–38; December, LXIV, pp. 19–71; 1797, January, LXVI, pp. 92–111; PSUSA, 1782, p. 96; 1783, cols 640–645; 1784, cols 128–134; MEB, 1782, pp. 260–264, 265–270, 273–277; 1785, pp. 161–165; NGLdI, 1788, pp. 270–272; MSSLC, 1795, XXI, pp. 1–17; 1799, II/I, pp. 21–32; 1800, I/I, pp. 57–79, I/II, pp. 41–67.

Reviews of the *Saggio della filosofia del Galilei*: GE, 1776, VII, pp. 68–71; 1777, IV, pp. 89–90; MT, 1777, II, pp. 303–308, where Galileo is considered the first physicist, geometer and philosopher of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

### 4.3 Paolo Marcello Del Mare (1734–1824)

#### *Quadro storico e critico delle opinioni filosofiche*

**4.3.1** Paolo Marcello Del Mare was born in Genoa in 1734. His family was Jewish but he converted to Christianity at the age of 19, soon revealing a vocation for the priesthood. Leaving Genoa, he received his cultural and ecclesiastic education in Rome and, for 1 year, in the Benedictine abbey in Subiaco. He was ordained a priest in 1758 in Rome and remained there in a community of Genoese priests, the Congregation of St. John the Baptist, which undertook missionary work. He thus had the opportunity to acquaint himself with the Jansenist circles in the city, creating a vast network of friends. As a dedicated follower of the spiritual movement which carried on the ideals of Port-Royal, in 1774 he became a Benedictine oblate in the monastery of Subiaco, then considered the most important Italian Jansenist centre.

This experience of monastic life lasted only 1 year, after which he went to teach moral theology at the Albenga seminary. Three years later, he moved to Genoa to become teacher of Holy Scriptures at the city's Pious Schools. In October, 1783, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Pietro Leopoldo II, sent for him to take up the chair of dogmatic theology at the University of Siena and also to direct the ecclesiastic Academy there. In 1787, once again at the request of the Grand Duke, and with the support of Scipione de' Ricci, the famous Jansenist bishop of Pistoia and Prato, he went to teach Holy Scripture, and temporarily also theology, at the University of Pisa.

In the years that followed, after the synod of Pistoia, Del Mare was involved both in the theological and spiritual debate triggered by Jansenist doctrines, and in the related jurisdictionalist Gallican debate; but he remained more interested in the first aspect of Jansenism than in the second. On several occasions he retracted the theological and ecclesiological doctrines to which he had previously adhered. He finally wrote a formal retraction in 1817 in a letter to the archbishop of Pisa, Mons. Ranieri Alliata, to be published after his death, and he publicly declared his support of Papacy in *L'ami de la Religion et du Roy* (1822, XXXII, p. 136), the renowned journal of the age of the Restoration. He died in Pisa on 17th February, 1824, at the age of ninety.

**4.3.2** A theologian, exegete, controversialist, and a scholar of literary, historical, and philosophical disciplines, Del Mare produced numerous works, mainly pertaining to his career as a university professor. In Siena, in 1785 he published the *Praelectiones dogmatico-morales de actibus humanis*. These lectures, inspired by the principles of Jansenism, aimed to oppose in particular the doctrine of moral probabilism. The *Praelectiones de locis theologicis* (Livorno, 1789) were also the product of a course he had taught in Siena. This work, dedicated to the Grand Duke Leopoldo II, did not win the approval of the ecclesiastic authorities: condemned on 9th December, 1793, it was soon put on the *Index of Forbidden Books*. His *Praenotationes biblicae ad tyrones*, a concise textbook for beginners in biblical studies, published only in 1813, was also comprised of university lectures. Closely linked to the Jansenist debate are a set of short works, mostly published anonymously, opposed to the dissemination of devotion to the Sacred Heart, and also the translation of the famous Jansenist catechism by P.-S. Gourelin (*Educazione ed istruzione cristiana ossia catechismo universale*, Genua, 1779, 3 tomes). Four tragedies (*Ciane e Cianippo ovvero gli oracoli*; *Zenobia, regina de' Palmireni*; *Le avventure di Carichia e Teagene*; *Arsinoe e Tolomeo*, Genua, 1785), were all written in an Arcadian style. The *Storia degli errori della rivoluzione di Francia*, unpublished, was probably written during Del Mare's profound critical reappraisal of the historic and political turmoil he had witnessed in the course of his long life.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the *Quadro storico e critico delle opinioni filosofiche* (tome, Genua: Stamperia Gesiniana, 1793; tome II, Pisa: presso Alessandro Landi, 1795) was

<sup>20</sup>This work was quoted, among others, by L. Grillo, *Elogi di Liguri illustri* (Genua, 1846–1877), IV, p. 244.



written during his later years. While reflecting a certain change in interests, this work was nonetheless undoubtedly intended for the theological and apologetic use of which he was a long-term advocate.

**4.3.3** The definition of philosophy used by Del Mare respects the oldest philosophical tradition. Philosophy is a love of knowledge, and a ‘philosopher’ is a “sincere lover of true knowledge”, its “trustworthy disciple”. Very soon, however, this ancient concept receives Augustinian, or more precisely Jansenist, inflections: “The constitutive nature of a true philosopher is to render man blessed” (I, pp. 2–4). Philosophy comes to man’s aid when he is overcome by passions. This is why Pythagoras wanted “the study of philosophy [...] with the aim of making man similar to God. But this end can only be attained through the scholarly search for truth, and this cannot be found if one does not seek it with a soul that has already been purged and freed of passions”. And, basing himself on Pythagoras’ *Golden Verses*, he observes: “Philosophy purifies man of his passions, separates him from matter and from all earthly bodies, perfects him and transports him towards celestial things” (I, p. 176).

Man has many limitations. He is, first of all, “by nature credulous, taken by the marvellous and the extraordinary”. Furthermore, “a fairy-tale enraptures him, a paradox blinds him, the multitude attracts him, and prejudice very often escorts his reasoning and his conduct”. And, invoking the light of divine revelation for man’s salvation, Del Mare writes: “The most absurd idolatry, a cult offensive to Divinity, the most extravagant fairy-tales, the most unlikely tales, a universal ignorance of one’s own being, of its origin and of its final destiny, were for many a century the tyrants of mankind, and they exist, however, in all those areas wherein the light of revelation has not yet transmitted the benefits of its rays” (I, p. 1). These topics, traditionally dear to the Augustinian Jansenist movement, reappear now and then throughout the work such as when, commenting on the well-known Socratic adage “I know that I do not know”, Del Mare states: “However presumptuous a man may be of his knowledge, and eager to extend its confines, it is also necessary to confess that the sum of the cognition nature made him capable of is very limited. Who is it that can aspire to the glory of knowing everything and is not subject in his judgements to deception?” (I, pp. 259–260).

Thus, philosophy is the “true medicine for the soul”. It is, however, a medicine that “can very easily change into a contagious disease” (I, p. x), as the Christian religion had been warning ever since the time of the Fathers, and of Jerome in particular. In this context, primacy is undoubtedly attributed to ethics and morals, “in which the good and blessed way of living consist” (II, p. 2). Indeed, for Del Mare true philosophy consists Socratically of “morals”. That being said, the history of philosophy is defined as the “history that includes the splendours of the human mind’s greatest efforts”. It is the “annals not of cities, provinces and empires, but of reason, which is as much as saying of the essential part of man” (I, pp. vi and ix). As has been observed (Motzo Dentice d’Accadia, p. 107), this is a “grandiloquent” tone, and it is similar to that deployed by Appiano Buonafede in the preface to his *Istoria e indole di ogni filosofia*. However, Del Mare, in his role as ecclesiastic and

apologist, had need of this tone if he wished to cut through Enlightenment unbelief. His history of philosophical doctrines and systems is basically a history of man's attempts to acquire the wisdom of life. There is a clear flow in Del Monte's work from an epistemological and intellectualist level to an ethical and pragmatic level. As he says in his introduction to Chrysippus, the Stoic who distinguished himself by "all kinds of licentiousness", the entire history of philosophy is "in reality" a "demonstration of the inconstancy and fickleness of those principles that have no other foundation than weak human understanding" (II, pp. 259–260). Moreover, the manifestation of truth throughout the centuries is manifold and varied and cannot be contained within the narrow confines of a philosophical system: "I am not a philosopher by profession", he says, "but a historian who is seeking truth and has always abhorred the notion of a system to which people wish to reduce facts" (I, p. 57).

### 4.3.4 *Quadro storico e critico delle opinioni filosofiche*

**4.3.4.1** In the preface to the work (I, pp. IX–XVII), Del Mare gives his reasons for undertaking it and above all his concept of philosophy and the history of philosophy. Immediately after this declaration of intent he professes his faith in the universal theism of philosophical history, against the Pyrrhonists and free-thinkers who had found their coryphaeus in Bayle. The preface closes with words of thanks to Mons. Angelo Maria Fabroni, the well-known Tuscan Jansenist, professor at the University of Pisa. Del Mare intended the whole work to be divided into two parts: "In the first, Philosophical History reaches the rebirth of letters and sciences in Europe [. . .]. In the second part, the Splendours of Philosophy will continue up to our own times" (I, pp. XVI–XVII). Despite these statements, the *Quadro storico e critico delle opinioni filosofiche* was inexplicably interrupted after the account of Epicurus, so that it only consists of two tomes.<sup>21</sup> The first tome was published under the pseudonym Oligo Talassiano and comprises the history of philosophy from the Barbarian to the Greek age of Socrates. The second is devoted to the rest of Greek philosophy, that is to say, from the Socratic schools (Cyrenaics, Megarians, Eliacs and Cynics) up to Epicurus and his sect, including the Platonists, Sceptics, Peripatetics, and Stoics. No information is provided by Del Mare concerning the subsequent ages of the history of "philosophical opinions".

**4.3.4.2** In the treatment of the first age of the history of philosophy, Barbarian philosophy, Del Mare proposes to insert "several systems, ignored by those who were my predecessors on this arduous path. These are the Tibetan System, an

<sup>21</sup>We do not know, however, whether the manuscript of the entire work was actually written and is still extant in some archive or library. On publication of the first tome, an anonymous reviewer wrote in GL that "this work, as appears from the plan [. . .], will consist of eight volumes in octavo of about 300 pages" (GL, 1793, XCII, p. 211).

account of which provides a new light for the proper understanding of the doctrine of Man, and the Mexican and Peruvian System" (I, pp. XVI–XVII). This first period is distinguished by the Hebrew patriarchs. As a "sincere lover" and "trustful follower of true Knowledge", the Hebrew patriarch may in fact be considered the first true philosopher in the history of mankind. It is pointless, Del Mare writes, explicitly contesting Brucker, "to seek traces of antediluvian Philosophers, and inquisitively investigate the Philosophy of Angels, Devils, Adam, Cain, Abel, etc." (I, pp. 2–3). The rest of the treatment follows the customary periodization found in Brucker and Buonafede, by whom he appears to have been inspired as far as the arrangement of his subject matter is concerned. Thus, for example, Pyrrho of Elis is not dealt with among the Eleatics but is included with Arcesilaus, Carneades, and the other Academics, given his "conformity of mind and philosophical principles" (II, p. 144). The account of Epicurean thought does not follow the treatment of the Eleatics "immediately after the treatment of Democritus' dogmas" (II, p. 273), according to "the order and concatenation of subjects", but after Stoic philosophy, ignoring the temporal order which is otherwise followed faithfully.

**4.3.4.3** Despite being incomplete, the work contains some clear historiographical theories, which are indeed common to all eighteenth-century Italian culture. As we have said, the first philosophers were perceived to be the Jews. This theory is not only aimed against the widespread belief that philosophy had been born first among the Chaldeans, Babylonians, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Egyptians (cf. I, p. 49), but also those, above all the Ancients, who maintained that "Philosophy originated in India, and in those most eastern regions, then spread to the southern areas of Africa, Persia and Chaldea, among the Phoenicians, and from there unfurled across the northern areas of our continent" (I, pp. 61–62). For Del Mare, the entire history of philosophy bears witness to the universal belief in God: the attitudes of Theodorus, Protagoras, or Diagoras are to be considered aberrations both in human thought and in customs. Hence, examining the various thinkers of antiquity one by one, Del Mare is keen, like Buonafede and frequently following him, to stress their theism. Thales, at heart, while not having had "the right idea about the Supreme Being", was not an atheist and, according to ancient testimony, "besides water, recognized an intelligent Being as the beginning of things" (I, p. 118). Anaximenes "should be considered innocent of the grave sin of atheism that is generally attributed to him" (I, p. 130). Del Mare rhetorically asks Leucippus, a supporter of "fatal necessity" and, according to Laertius, "the first to posit atoms as the origins of things" the following question: "If atoms are not animate, who gave them movement and life?" (I, p. 213). There were certainly examples of impiety in Antiquity: first of all Protagoras, then Diagoras, and then Theodorus, better "known by the infamous name of Atheist" (II, p. 14). History tells us, however, that these philosophers were universally condemned, and indeed being denounced for atheism was considered by all to be "the most atrocious of accusations", as can clearly be seen in the case of Socrates; and, to the mind of the Ancients, "public decency" depended on belief in God (I, pp. 255 and 258).

The condemnation of atheism is accompanied by a condemnation of Spinozism and materialism. According to a well-established historiographical custom, Del

Mare looked for the forerunners of Spinoza throughout history from ancient times. Thus, like other historians of philosophy, he also believed that the cosmological system of the ancient Stoics, “despite the magnificent ostentatious expressions they used about Divinity and the incomprehensible attributes with which it was adorned”, “was substantially no different from Spinoza’s” (II, pp. 229–230). And Xenophanes was “the first to open the door to the absurd system which Spinoza, and all the godless men who preached the diversely modified single substance, held up triumphantly”. This is a “serious accusation”, but historians of philosophy such as Buddeus, Pelvert and the “profound” Pluquet in the *Examen du Fatalisme* agreed with it (I, p. 197). Stilpon of Megara, on the other hand, is found not guilty of the accusation of being a Spinozist, which “rested on the fact that he had rejected universals”. “But”, observes Del Mare, “if the denial of *universals* were to lead to Spinozism and atheism, all our metaphysicians, including Bayle himself, would be called Spinozists and atheists because they reject universals” (II, p. 35).

To move on now to judgements less motivated by apologetic factors, it is worth noting how Del Mare’s historiography is rather critical of all ancient philosophy, both Barbarian and Greek. In the first place, the “task of presenting an outline of the philosophical system of the ancient peoples” seems to him “difficult”. Venturing into the philosophy of the ancient Egyptians, for example, is judged to be a “disastrous journey”, above all for the lack of reliable documents on which to base a historical narration (I, pp. 42–43). What the Greeks wrote, then, “to explain the origin of things and the economy of the universe” can be considered “novel” (I, p. 192). Del Mare pays particular attention, however, to the ethical doctrines elaborated by the ancient Greeks, and above all by Socrates, who seems to him, despite the importance of his moral status, to be “fluctuating around those maxims that he so loftily preached”, “uncertain at the end of his life” about the immortality of the soul, whose doctrine he had taught so passionately, and with such conviction. And as for Plato’s morals, they produce nothing but “enthusiasts, false mystics and fanatics”, and Plato’s moral apophthegms “are not such that can make man holy and just” (II, p. 109). “Being transported by his own enthusiasm”, Del Mare writes, “and by the fertility of his mind, Plato did not know [...] how to steer a middle course” (I, p. 113). Plato is conceded the “gift of eloquence, keenness of mind, vastness of knowledge” and above all “a lively [...] creative imagination, more proper to a poet than to a profound philosopher”. But, “as far as his philosophy is concerned, he is inconsistent, obscure, nearly always fluctuating and so full of contradictions and errors that it is difficult to understand how he could have found for so many centuries not only praise and amazement but also almost divine honours; and no other mortal has risen to such glory and has obtained so many followers and admirers, many of whom have perhaps never understood or even read him. Among the latter we can include, without any offence, those gentlemen [the Encyclopaedists] who condescended to inform mankind, whose masters and benefactors they modestly claim to be, that ‘a man of genius gains more profit from a single page of Plato than from a thousand books of criticism’. And this perhaps may be the reason why so little criticism is found in that huge rhapsody, as has been conspicuously proven by many great men” (II, pp. 114–115).

Aristotle is also criticized, mainly for his moral doctrine: “infected by false and absurd notions of metaphysics and physics, he did not know the nature of the faculties of the soul, nor was he aware of the nature of moral evil and moral good”; and, finally, “led by the false conviction that, in the case of morality, there is no eternal and infallible subject of demonstration, he introduced a highly dangerous scepticism into the rules governing customs” (II, pp. 192–193). Criticism of the Stagirite thus continues: “In weighing up the physical rather than the moral aspect of the human heart, Aristotle measured man’s duties, not from his moral nature but from civil happiness. He therefore expected to fashion a courtier rather than a good man. Neither God nor the eternal bliss reserved for the good, nor the eternal torments awaiting the godless rectify his ethics. What is one then to say to the fact that he placed a desire for glory, an appetite for earthly and transient goods, a memory of insults, and a spirit of revenge and haughtiness among the virtues? And does it not make humanity shudder to see a philosopher who sets himself up as a teacher of humankind permit abortion, and give parents full permission to kill defective or superfluous offspring?” (II, pp. 193–194). This criticism of Aristotle extends to “the enthusiastic worshippers of Aristotle” (II, p. 158), all of whom engaged, “in terrible debates”, in clarifying “so much obscurity of meaning” introduced so generously by the Stagirite into his works (II, pp. 158 and 182). The medieval Scholastics are similarly criticised, they who “inebriated with peripatetic trivialities, abandoned the clear sources of revelation for their moral precepts, in order to draw them from the murky depths of the Peripatus”, causing “harm [ . . . ] as much to religion as to custom” (II, p. 195).

Together with Platonism and Aristotelianism, another doctrine of the ancient age is condemned, namely Stoicism: “A fatal necessity to which everything, including all human actions, are subject, and a virtue that is both haughty and false, by which man becomes insensitive to everything, are the two opposing and contradictory hinges on which the whole great body of Stoicism, a worthy heir to the Cynics’ school, revolves” (II, p. 215). The ideas of Zeno of Citium, the leader of the Stoic school, are described as “incomprehensible bravado”; and his followers are “false sages” and “false religious” of their age (II, pp. 241 and 302), who “had no idea [ . . . ] of the love of God, of humility of heart, which they considered rather to be a vice, of chastity, etc.” (II, p. 241). Their logical doctrines were “shameful logomachies” (II, p. 246). In short, for Del Mare “the Stoic colossus is a set of doctrines from the Pythagorean, Platonic, Eleatic, Peripatetic, Megarian, and other sects, but especially from the Cynics’ in moral matters, from whom Zeno took the great principle that ‘the wise man needs nothing in order to be self sufficient’” (II, p. 249).

In contrast to his condemnation of Stoic philosophy, Del Mare praises Epicurean philosophy, whose restoration in modern times came about thanks to the “immortal Gassendi”. Gassendi attempted to “render justice” to Epicurus against both ancient and modern detractors and slanderers, and particularly exalted his moral doctrine and “gentle, playful and tranquil” way of life in driving away “all worry, all fear and anxiety about future ills that do not yet exist, all fear of death, which has nothing to do with us” (II, pp. 299–300). This exaltation of Epicurus should not surprise us. Del

Mare, the Jansenist, fosters the image of an Epicurus who “equally rejects both the foolish doubts of the Academics and Sceptics and the audacious affirmations of the Dogmatics”, of an Epicurus who “agreed with Socrates in considering morals to be the essence of philosophy”, without, however, abandoning the study of physics, by means of which “one contemplates nature”, “whereby every childish anxiety, fear, and panic is removed from the soul” (II, p. 276). And, what is most important for Del Mare, Epicurus believed in a God that was providential and benevolent towards man, and certainly did not preach licentious morals but a doctrine in which pleasure arose not from “unbridled passions”, but “from the freedom from passions” and “an inner peace” (II, p. 300).

As we have said, the work stops abruptly after the section on Epicurus; thus, we do not know how Del Mare would have judged the following periods in the history of philosophy. We have already noticed, however, a negative opinion of medieval Scholasticism, anchored to “Peripatetic trifles” rather than to the pure scriptural and patristic sources of Christianity. Similarly, we can glean here and there clearly negative judgements on his own time, the century of the Enlightenment. Del Mare contests Pierre Bayle, whom he considers to be “still too famous a writer” (I, p. 206); and he contests the Encyclopaedists, who offer themselves to mankind as “masters and benefactors” (II, p. 115). He also criticises the “philosophical fever” of his own time, defined as a kind of “epidemic” which “seems to renew its fatal symptoms with greater fury and peril” (II, p. 145). The contemporary age seems to him to be full “more than ever” not of true philosophers but of “philosophasters” and “braggarts” (I, p. 263; II, p. 243).

**4.3.4.4** Del Mare’s work announces in its very title that it is a history of philosophers’ “opinions”. Opinions, from a methodological point of view, must be handled impartially. In the preface, Del Mare explains that in his “difficult journey through the philosophical world” he has behaved “as a true cosmopolitan, without a fatherland and without supporting any single system or any single author”, assuring readers that he “respected and revered them all”. The opposite of this method is to go “in search not of what is, but of what one would want there to be, attempting to make the deeds and words of others fit a pre-established plan and the system chosen”. One of the many examples of what Del Mare perceives as misguided historiography is obviously Bayle: “Who does not know Bayle’s efforts to associate the writings of both ancient and modern philosophers with atheism? Convinced of the beauty of the Republic of Atheists, he attempts all means to increase its membership”. Not only Bayle, but also Deslandes and Buddeus were guilty of bias in writing their histories. In support of his own intent, Del Mare again writes: “The underlying foundation that I set myself when I started this difficult enterprise was that my system should have no system. I approached the work with a soul free of bias: I have sought to reach the sources, where they were accessible; where they were lacking, I had recourse to closer rivulets” (I, pp. XIV–XV).

We can observe how the “correct and unbiased judgement” (II, p. 157) that Del Mare insists on does not merely mean recording philosophers’ lives and sayings according to the doxological methods that had long been abandoned by the historiography of philosophy. Besides being “historical”, his *Quadro* also intends

to be “critical”, precisely in the spirit of the cultural sensitivity of the eighteenth century. His critical endeavour must serve historical truth: it is not Del Mare’s style merely to put forward a judgement, an interpretation, or a religious apologetic. Prior to dealing with Epicurus, Del Mare confesses that besides the “impartiality” he has always professed, he has also pursued “the love of truth”, which “has been our faithful companion in the course of this work” (II, p. 273). Against Cornelius de Pauw, who in his *Recherches philosophiques sur les Egyptiens et les Chinois* (Berlin, 1773) had worn “the philosophical frock typical of the eighteenth-century” and “in this garb” had decided “on the origins of the doctrines and systems of nations, according to the system he had fixed in his head beforehand, the main aim of which was to discredit Mosaic narration and universally received and revered doctrines”, Del Mare writes: “we do not profess ourselves to be *philosophers* but *historians* who seek traces of the truth and have always abhorred the spirit of a system to which facts have to be restricted”. It is one thing “to dream up systems and on these guess at what one does not know”, and quite another “to speak with documents in one’s hand, with proven ratiocination and with the candour, impartiality, and modesty that will always shape the character of a truthful and sincere man, and a true historian” (I, pp. 56–57).

Given the scarcity of documents concerning the history of ancient Greek and pre-Greek philosophy, then, the best thing to do is not to spend too long on all these questions and thinkers, about whom it is best to “reason” “one by one”, “but with brevity” (I, p. 210). Thus, even with the important figure of Democritus, Del Mare proposes “to set out his philosophical [...] doctrines with the utmost precision and brevity” (I, p. 216); he presents Plato’s philosophical system “in a nutshell”, just as he extracted it from the *Timaeus*, the dialogue “where it seems to be best developed” (II, p. 78). He aims to carry out a “succinct presentation of the deeds and doctrine” of Pythagoras “after the most precise research” (II, p. 151). A “sketch” of Xenophanes’ theory will suffice to see this philosopher as the forefather of the Spinozists (II, p. 197). A “sketch” will also be enough for Epicurean ethics if we wish to have a clear idea of its basic tenets, even though this is the greatest of all ancient philosophical doctrines (II, p. 300). In short, his method is, by his own admission, to follow the golden “middle course”: “the middle course has always been believed by ourselves to be the best”. Hence, with this methodological principle, even Aristotelian logic, while containing many “defects”, “reveals an elevated mind and profound thinking”, and “Aristotle’s treatise on the syllogism is certainly not to be despised” (II, p. 172).

Nonetheless, the ‘neutral’ nature of these methodological principles did not prevent Del Mare from offering occasional judgements which take the reader from a historical to an ethical and theological truth. After setting out Pythagorean Platonic theology and psychology, for example, he writes: “We consider it necessary to re-examine it, and add, with the aid of esteemed men, some reflections that show its vanity and stupidity. We believe we are all the more obliged to carry out this task because in this period there have been those who have studied a way of re-establishing all the Pythagorean and Platonic extravagances, and presenting them as worthy, in the guise of piety and religion” (II, pp. 97–98). He does the same when he wants to highlight the negative aspects of Aristotelian ethics, as we have

already seen. Del Mare's historiography, which presents itself as being as objective as possible, is transformed, therefore, into a historiography in which ethical and theological judgement takes on decisive importance.

In his search for the *veritas* Del Mare continually appeals not only to ancient sources (Cicero, Diodorus Siculus, Laertius, the Suda, Plutarch, Favorinus, Simplicius, Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, Augustin, Lactantius), but also to the modern historiographers of philosophy, from both the Protestant and the Catholic domains. Brucker is defined as "indefatigable" (I, p. 68; II, pp. 166 and 198), "learned" (I, pp. 132 and 259; II, pp. 16 and 203), and "untiring" (II, p. 204), for his "heroic patience in minutely examining and scrupulously weighing up the reasons on either side" in controversial issues (II, p. 166). Indeed, Del Mare refers readers to him frequently. He feels Cudworth to be "highly learned", and his translator and commentator Mosheim "eminent" (II, p. 224). By contrast, Del Mare does not greatly esteem Appiano Buonafede, whom he considers to be influenced by a "spirit of system", and he continually contrasts him with the "learned Brucker" (I, p. xv). Only on one occasion does he "like the opinion of Father Abbot Buonafede very much", namely when he interprets Epicurus' atoms as "embellished with a soul", from which the "force of veering" originates, which can be identified with the "principle of freedom" (II, p. 283). But Del Mare's preferences were above all for those historians of philosophy who shared the spiritual ideals professed by the Jansenist movement: Peltvert, in particular, and his *Exposition succincte et comparaison de la doctrine des anciens et des nouveaux philosophes* (Paris, 1787; cf. above, Sect. 3.3). "This was", Del Mare writes in the preface, "what first inspired me to try my efforts against an enterprise which I thought was too great for them. Although I do not always agree with the Author of this work, I have followed his plan in some parts; and I had no scruples about adopting his thoughts more than once, as it is clear from the quotations" (I, p. xvi). After Peltvert comes the "profound Pluquet" (I, p. 218), a moderate Jansenist, author of *Examen du Fatalisme* (Paris, 1757; cf. above, Sect. 3.1), and Alessio Simmaco Mazzocchi (1684–1771), a Neapolitan Canon and author of a successful *Spicilegium biblicum* (Naples, 1778).

**4.3.5** The first two tomes of Del Mare's *Quadro storico e critico delle opinioni filosofiche* immediately received positive reviews from the *Giornale de' letterati* of Pisa, a periodical close to Jansenist circles. The anonymous reviewer undoubtedly appreciated the "[author's] particular zeal in establishing sound doctrine", "enraptured by which he fervently desired that everyone, in philosophizing on God in particular, should take Revelation, or that reason supported and protected by Revelation, as a norm" (GL, 1793, xcii, p. 197). It is noted that Del Mare's history of philosophy begins (and this is a view dear to the Jansenists) with "the first Philosophers' loss of the light of Revelation and the authentic tradition concerning the early origin of the world" (p. 199). For the reviewer, this constitutes the main key to the interpretation of the history of mankind followed by Del Mare. And when the reviewer comes to the presentation of Chrysippus, "Of the many things said of him", he writes, "it is judiciously observed that the example of this philosopher alone, even if there were not an infinite number of others, would serve clearly to show how weak, limp, and inconstant philosophy usually is when it is entrusted in



certain points to reason alone” (GL, 1796, CI, pp. 89–92). However, apart from the praise of the work from Jansenist circles, it received little attention from the wider cultural world of the time. In other European countries, scholars do not seem to have noticed Del Mare’s work at all. The book market was by then saturated with works of this nature, and Italy had already found its first great historian of philosophy with Appiano Buonafede. Paolo Marcello Del Mare’s name was later linked more to the history of the Italian Jansenist movement, of which he was an ardent and sincere representative, than to his incomplete history of philosophy.

**4.3.6** On Del Mare’s life and works: ‘Notizia necrologica del Professore D. Paolo Marcello Del Mare’, *Memorie di religione, di morale, e di letteratura*, 1824, v, pp. 314–320; A. Sbertoli, ‘Paolo M. Marcello Del Mare’, *Giornale degli studiosi di lettere, scienze, arti e mestieri* [Genua], 1st October 1870, pp. 176–183; DBI, XXXVIII (Rome, 1990), pp. 111–113.

On Del Mare and Italian Jansenism: N. Rodolico, *Gli amici e i tempi di Scipione dei Ricci. Saggio sul giansenismo italiano* (Florence, 1920); M.T. Escoffier, *Gli ultimi riflessi del giansenismo ligure* (Bergamo, 1931); E. Codignola, *Carteggi di giansenisti liguri*, I (Florence, 1941), pp. IX–CCLIX and 345–531; III (Florence, 1942), pp. 720–731; B. Matteucci, *Scipione de’ Ricci. Saggio storico teologico sul giansenismo italiano* (Brescia, 1941), pp. 52–53; *Storia dell’Università di Pisa. II/1–3: 1737–1861* (Pisa, 2000), Tome 1, pp. 146–147, 170, 173; Tome 2, pp. 428, 454, 455, 456; Tome 3, pp. 1068 and 1070.

On his history of philosophy: Motzo Dentice d’Accadia, pp. 107–109; Natali, I, pp. 256 and 401.

Only two reviews of the *Quadro storico e critico delle opinioni filosofiche* have been found: GL, 1793, XCII, pp. 195–211; 1796, CI, pp. 75–93; MSSLC, 1794, x, p. 61.

## **4.4 Antonio Meneghelli (1765–1844)**

### ***Saggio storico-critico sopra la filosofia della Grecia e del Lazio***

**4.4.1** Antonio Meneghelli wrote a history of philosophy devoted to a particular period of time, that of the Greeks and Romans, but the way in which he interprets the classical age, following modern historiographical categories, and adding numerous judgements, allows him to extend his treatment to other periods in the history of philosophy. Meneghelli was born in Verona on 15th August, 1765, but his cultural education took place entirely in Venice, where his family settled. He studied under various masters, among whom we can mention the Conventual Franciscan Federico Lauro Barbarigo, of the convent of S. Nicoletto dei Frari, who was to become general minister of the Order. After being ordained, Meneghelli worked as a preceptor and teacher in Venice, first at the college of Abbot Brustoloni, then for the noble Donà family. It was during this period, in 1794, that he obtained a degree

in philosophy at the ancient medical and physical College set up “apud Ecclesiam S. Jacobi de Luprio” in Venice, as is stated on his diploma, which is kept in the Biblioteca civica in Padua (ms. BP 5808).

In 1805, Meneghelli was invited to teach eloquence and civil law at the St. Catherine public school in Venice, which was transformed in 1807 into a high school for boarders. In the new political situation, Meneghelli was called to take up the chair of “Civil Institutions Compared to the French Code”. When the Austrians returned to power in the former Repubblica Veneta in 1815, Meneghelli was appointed professor of the “Introduction to Legal and Political Studies and Feudal Rights” at the University of Padua, a chair that was subsequently changed to that of “Exchange, Maritime and Navigational Mercantile Rights”. In 1823 he became Rector of the University of Padua and in the following year he was accepted at his own request as an active associate of the Paduan Academy of Sciences, Literature and Arts, of which he went on to become president from 1826 to 1827. He was even more active during his long old age, dedicating himself to humanist literary studies, becoming a renowned expert on Petrarch, and engaging in a famous polemic with Ugo Foscolo. He died in 1844, at the age of almost 80.

**4.4.2** Antonio Meneghelli’s literary production is comprised of around 50 works of different kinds, published throughout his long life, and finally collected into two separate editions, one by the Minerva printers (Padua, 1831, 6 vols), and the other by the Sicca publishing house (Padua, 1843, 4 vols). More than being a man of great learning, Meneghelli was a representative of the eighteenth-century literary *salon*, open to diverse interests and all circumstances where the presence of a person of letters was required. Hence many of his works were written for specific occasions: eulogies for famous men, various celebrations, commemorations, inaugural or academic speeches, and so on. A notable number of his works are devoted to the study of Petrarch: *Discorsi accademici sopra il Canzoniere di F. Petrarca*; *Osservazioni sopra una lettera dei Fiorentini al Petrarca*; *Osservazioni sopra una lettera del Petrarca al Boccaccio*; *Del canonico di monsignor F. Petrarca*; *Della edizione delle rime di Petrarca pubblicate per opera e studio del professor Marsand*; *Sul presunto ritratto di madonna Laura*; *Sopra due lettere italiane attribuite al Petrarca*. However, relatively few are devoted specifically to philosophical themes. Although he held the title of ‘Doctor of Philosophy’, the chairs to which he was appointed were never connected with philosophy. Here we can mention his paper *Della influenza delle lettere nelle scienze*, the *Della influenza delle lettere nella morale* and also the *Saggio storico-critico sopra la filosofia della Grecia e del Lazio* of 1806, which we follow here in the Paduan edition of the *Opera Omnia* of 1830–1831, III, pp. 63–254.

This work originated as an continuation of the *Lycée, ou Cours de littérature ancienne et moderne* by the well-known Frenchman of letters, La Harpe, which Meneghelli published in an Italian translation (*Liceo ovvero Corso di letteratura antica e moderna*) from 1803 to 1808 at the Giovanni Antonio Perlini publishers in Venice. La Harpe’s already monumental work on ancient and modern literature (cf. above, Chap. 3, Introd.) was hence augmented even further by Meneghelli’s various

additions, which ranged over the entire period of Italian literature with an ease of judgement that bordered on the superficial and the approximate.

**4.4.3** The concept of philosophy at the root of the *Saggio storico-critico sopra la filosofia della Grecia e del Lazio* is clearly inspired by the principles of the Enlightenment. For Meneghelli, ‘philosophy’ is mainly an enquiry into nature and the science of physics. Philosophy, therefore, is properly placed among the sciences and not among “pleasant literature”. It is, like the sciences, the “offspring of necessity”, and not the “offspring of pleasure”, as is the case for belles-lettres. As one of the sciences, philosophy has followed from the “infancy of the world” a “path [...] as perilous and hard as the discovery of truth enveloped in mystery and error is difficult” (*Saggio*, p. 66). “The ways of beauty”, on the contrary, appear “joyful and safe”. The method which must be applied to philosophy, to the same extent as in the other sciences, is the strict analytical and experimental method, fully developed by man only in the modern age. “The fame of authors and the value of their works depend on the correct progression of ideas, on the strict concatenation between principles and consequences, and on the spirit of observation and analysis”, Meneghelli writes, “just as in the arts of beauty the zealous imitation of nature permits the creators and their enterprises to fly on the wings of fame” (pp. 115–116).

A philosopher, therefore, just like a scientist, must be capable of “seeing for himself” and “breaking the burdensome shackles” of tradition (p. 72), treading his own path by means of experimentation. Thales made assertions that he was not able to prove and thus did not qualify as a true philosopher. “He may well have been a great geometrician and physicist, as they claim; but the excessive exultation, the sacrifice of the hecatomb for the theory of the Hypotenuse, if ever he was responsible for this discovery, do not recommend him to us as a philosopher; and the bizarre idea of wanting to explain the generation of beings through the generation of numbers does him no great honour” (p. 93). A science like philosophy, traditionally “consecrated to the discovery of truth” (p. 234), must not proceed by intuition and magniloquent syntheses, but by observation, analysis and experimentation. “Any synthesis, whose offspring does not derive from an analytical origin”, Meneghelli writes, “wears the guise of a novel and a dream”. And further: “it is only possible to reach the discovery of truth through a long series of ratiocination, facts, examination, and analysis”. Only in this way is it possible to erect that “scientific edifice” that gives “men happiness” and “nations well-being” (pp. 108 and 111).

The history of philosophy, therefore, is the history of a science, the “science of reason”, which has only acquired its code of behaviour in modern times. For this reason, according to Meneghelli, there was no philosophy among the Greeks or the Romans, or even in the age-long Aristotelian, Platonic or Scholastic traditions. For this reason, writing the history of philosophy does not strictly mean “enumerating sects, founders of schools, followers, and certain minutely detailed doctrines”. It should concern itself even less with obscure and mediocre men, the list of whom would be extremely long. The historian of philosophy must essentially consider the forward steps made by reason and its difficult, tortuous path through the centuries, noting “the causes of its slow progress” and “the obstacles that had to be faced” by

the ancients. The history of philosophy is, therefore, not a “sterile history of some opinions”, it is not the writing of annals, but rather entails “studying how to explain the path followed in the science of reason”. This involves “much more than simply becoming a historian”. “Those who love bare facts”, continues Meneghelli, “those who wish to know what was thought and said, from Thales to Aristotle, and go back from them to the times of the barbarians, have enough to satisfy them to the point of satiation, indeed to extreme boredom, there being enough writers of the annals of philosophy, starting with Brucker and Stanley and coming down to the various Deslandes and Cromazianos to form a well-stocked library” (p. 68).

#### **4.4.4 *Saggio storico-critico sopra la filosofia della Grecia e del Lazio***

**4.4.4.1** In giving his main reason for writing the *Saggio*, Meneghelli wrote in a concluding note at the end of the work that it “was dictated and published from the year 1806 with the intention of compensating for the silence of La Harpe, who in dealing with the philosophy of the Greeks and Romans spoke only of Plato and Seneca”. It was printed as a work in its own right in octavo format by the Pedini printers in Venice – undated but actually in 1806, as Meneghelli himself states in his autobiography (*La mia vita*, p. 71) – with no further modifications or additions except for a brief dedication to the Venetian patrician Francesco Gritti.

The *Saggio* opens with an ‘Introduzione’ outlining the “philosophical” reasons behind the work. The treatment is divided into two parts, the first devoted to the philosophy of the Greeks, and the second, shorter, one to “philosophy in Lazio” (pp. 69–169 and 170–235). These two parts, in turn, are divided into a number of lengthy chapters: four on Greek philosophy (‘On Greek philosophy from Thales up to the days of Socrates’; ‘On Socrates’ philosophy and on the way some pupils of that school philosophized’; ‘On the sects that flourished from Plato to the decline of Greece’; ‘On the philosophers that flourished elsewhere, and on those that distinguished themselves after the decline of the Greek republics’); only two, on the other hand, are devoted to Roman philosophy (‘On philosophy in Lazio from the origin of Rome to the empire of Augustus’; ‘On the Romans’ philosophy from the death of Augustus to the Barbarian invasions’). These chapters are followed by 249 annotations (pp. 237–254), which not only indicate the sources, but also provide discussions of a historiographical nature with the fathers of modern historiography of philosophy and the main cultural representatives of the time, particularly Meiners, Condorcet and the Italians Tiraboschi and Buonafede.

**4.4.4.2** The division of the history of ancient philosophy into periods follows the division into chapters. The first age of Greek philosophy covers the period from Thales to Socrates (Ch. 1). This is the period of its origins, dominated by contributions from the peoples of the Middle East, particularly the Phoenicians and Egyptians, from whom the Greek philosophers obtained their knowledge. This

is the most glorious period for Greek philosophy, before the wars between the philosophical schools, which “multiplied only when the misfortunes of Athens grew”. “From the days of Thales to those of Socrates, which are certainly the most glorious in the splendour of that republic, rare were the founders of schools and few the proselytes” (p. 83). The first age of Greek philosophy is further divided into three schools: the Ionic, Pythagorean, and Eleatic. To the founders of these three philosophical schools, Thales, Pythagoras, and Xenophanes, “Greece was indebted for the knowledge that she proudly boasted in the days of Socrates” (p. 87).

The second age of Greek philosophy is the Socratic. Socrates introduced a new way of philosophizing, and indeed he was “the only one Greece had in the philosophical field”, “the first to prove that reasoning had so far been rather poor”, “the first to point the way to be followed in order to discover truth”, “the first to dictate the clearest precepts belonging to science that affects man’s happiness most closely”. The Socratic age was extended by his disciples Xenophon and Plato, the former “restricted himself merely to repeating whatever he had harvested from Socrates’ lips”, and this is where his greatness lies, whereas the latter, not objecting to “coming to an agreement with the Sophists”, ended up by becoming a “bizarre Pyrrhonist” (pp. 119, 120, 125, and 131).

The third age of Greek philosophy comprises the schools that flourished from the time of Plato to the “decline of Greece” (cf. pp. 132–149). This is an age which was mainly characterized by Scepticism (Pyrrho, Arcesilaus, Carneades): “the name philosopher had by then become a synonym for manic, and philosophy was identical to complete delirium”. Cynics, Stoics, and Epicureans, moreover, constitute “the seal to the penchant for creating fantasies of the [Greek] nation” (pp. 136–137). The political decline of Greece led to the period of the ‘diaspora’ of Greek philosophers, who mainly headed for Alexandria in Egypt and the capital of the Roman empire.

Meneghelli distinguishes only two periods in the history of Roman philosophy: one from its origins up to the age of Augustus, and the other embracing the entire period of the empire up to the arrival of the Barbarian peoples: an age of decline, which was to be followed by the long Middle Ages, subject to “desolating wars”. Only in the fifteenth century would the Greeks, “refugees from conquered Byzantium”, begin a new phase of philosophical thought and culture in general, with the “tyrannical” rebirth of Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy. Descartes, finally, “having broken the chains of the Academy and the Peripatus”, was to let philosophy “breathe” an “aura of truth and grandeur” thus inaugurating the glorious modern age (p. 235).

**4.4.4.3** Besides the perspectives typical of eighteenth-century historiography, Meneghelli’s work seems to be animated by historiographical theories announcing the imminent age of the Restoration after the period of revolution and Enlightenment ideals. As far as philosophy in particular is concerned, he observes how it develops and makes progress only during orderly monarchical rule, not during the disorder of democracies or even in times when “tyranny was to turn the citizens pale”. If philosophy made little progress in the so-called Greek age of poets, when it was more than anything “a pastime”, “its complete decline” came about during the

regime of tyranny, when “poverty had led to the final despondency of minds”, and “opulence had corrupted every heart” (p. 211).

The three ages of Greek philosophy, from Thales to Socrates, from Socrates to the Socratic school, and from Plato to Pyrrho, are unmistakably marked by the various forms of political turmoil that developed in Greece itself. In the first period “they did not learn to think because they set out from the hypothesis of knowing everything”, as is the custom of the poet prophet. In the second, “the dawn of truth appeared because the healthy suspicion of having caught sight of the goal arose”, but truth was soon obscured by the degeneration of democracy and popular uprisings. In the third age “all the work of the second was destroyed because there was a mania for accepting as certain that all was in doubt and that it was not possible to know anything” (p. 69). This was the age when bitterly opposed philosophical schools diffused and multiplied.

In the history of Greek philosophy, Aristotle is the only true philosopher who can be recorded. But, to tell the truth, Aristotle is to be “included among the philosophers that flourished outside Athens [. . .]. It was in Athens that he was initiated into the mysteries of philosophy, opened his school, and had a select circle of keen disciples; but that was not his home town, and neither, strictly speaking, was that man who owed his progress and name more to himself than to others, educated there. Aristotle was indebted for his inclination to serious meditation, and for the temper of his education, to the fatherland where he was born. Born in Stagira, a city in Macedonia, and brought up under a monarchical constitution, his spirit did not suffer the shocks and was not disturbed by the friction between parties, the desire to be first, and the ceaseless trickery characteristic of popular governments. He did not suffer from the clamour that divides the citizen’s attention among a thousand objects and makes him a victim to a thousand desires, the plaything of a thousand vicissitudes, accustomed to fly from one thought to the next, from one affection to the next, without respite”. Under monarchical governments “the mass of the nation” simply has to entrust itself to the “hands of a single man”; “not more than a spectator of what happens daily, it lives entirely attending to its interests”. Therefore, Meneghelli observes, “it is in the bosom of that tranquility that souls born to meditate acquire I know not what disposition from their childhood and find every opportunity in their maturity”. In short, he concludes, the “strict sciences”, among which, as we have said, we find philosophy, “seem to be characteristic of monarchical constitutions”, while “arts, pleasant reading and above all divine eloquence, that of republics” (pp. 149–150). This theory, which is apparent throughout Abbot Meneghelli’s work, lies at the root of his extremely negative opinion about the entire development of both Greek and Roman philosophy.

Besides this fundamental theory that philosophy affirmed itself under monarchical governments there is another, inspired by the Baconian tradition, that maintains that true philosophers are those “extraordinary men, capable of seeing for themselves”, and capable of “overcoming difficult stumbling-blocks”, freely questioning nature, “like Socrates among the Athenians and Bacon among us” (p. 72). The Greeks and the Romans, therefore, were not ‘inventors’ in philosophical

matters. The Greeks imported their learning from Phoenicia and above all from Egypt, and the Romans imported theirs from the Greeks, without, however, critically verifying what they were told. Apart from this “importation” or “drawing” of philosophy from other peoples, the Greeks did not know how to meditate upon nature, that is, to keep to “the path of observation, [...] where every step depends on the fact that some phenomena are certain, and every discovery on the rigorous application of facts to principles”, as, on the contrary, the ancient Egyptians and peoples of the East had done. The Greeks, “pupils” of these populations, “were happy to expound opinions without going back to the proofs that sustain them. Hence in astronomy, not to mention the other sciences, you will hear speak of the earth’s movements, the antipodes, the plurality of worlds, the attraction of celestial bodies, phases of the moon, eclipses, the nature of stars and planets, elliptical orbits, comets, etc., in the manner of a historian who places all his trust in others and holds stating and proving to be synonymous. This certainly means that they understood little of the doctrines of their preceptors” (pp. 76–77).

The entire history of Greek philosophy is enveloped in “chaos”, that is, in “a mixture of the serious and the ridiculous, of the great and the puerile, of the admirable and the strange” (p. 86). In Greece, philosophy was first the “echo of Oriental opinions”, then the “tool of reprehensible amusement, condemned to pervert morals and sow the seeds of the most perilous Pyrrhonism” (p. 99). Socrates alone knew how to “cast the foundations of true knowledge”; in knowing the “physical and intellectual world” he “wanted to unveil reluctant nature”. In order to do so, it was first necessary “to propose certain rules so that one might reason on things as it is best”. “But how did he succeed in this difficult enterprise?” Meneghelli wonders, and then replies in answer to his own question: “With doubt, in order to combat the uncertain opinions that arrogantly claimed the rights of as many proven truths, and with analysis, in order to establish those few truths that his sagacity, far from claiming any omniscience, believed to be safe from the most scrupulous scepticism” (pp. 105–106). Further on, still referring to Socrates, Meneghelli states: “One only attains the truth through a long series of ratiocination, facts, examination and analysis”. Only in this way is it possible “to build a scientific edifice”, which has as its final aim “the happiness of man and the welfare of nations” (p. 111). This is clearly a Baconian interpretation of Socrates and it effectively proves how strong the ideals of the father of modern science were in Meneghelli.

Unlike Socrates, Plato was nothing but a “bizarre Pyrrhonist”. “Philosophy was not indebted to him for a single decisive and advantageous step”; Plato “intruded into the temple of philosophy without having any vocation for it, [...] in his hands philosophy was nothing but a fatal art, which taught how to discuss everything without defining anything”. Even Plato’s style was “adverse to the discovery of truth”: “ambiguous”, “allegorical”, “mannered”, “inconsistent”, and not “precise, natural, simple or invariable”, as, on the contrary, the style of a true philosopher should be (pp. 122–127). The later developments in Greek philosophy are described as the history of various forms of delirium and fantasy. The Cynics, Stoics and

Epicureans, therefore, were nothing but the “seal of the [Greek] nation’s fantasizing spirit” (p. 137), which lacked any capacity for enquiring into the principles of nature.

Meneghelli’s judgement of the history of Roman philosophy runs, on the whole, very much along the same lines. Among the Latins, “philosophy experienced the same vicissitudes as literature, without, however, being able to boast of the same progress” (p. 170); that is to say, it was not considered a strict science, as it should have been. Secondly, Meneghelli states that the Romans as philosophers were never ‘inventors’, capable of questioning nature or discovering its secrets. They restricted themselves to an a-critical dependence on the Greeks: “Whenever the Romans applied their lips to philosophy, they were to the Greeks what the Greeks had been to Egypt and the East” (p. 178). Even Cicero, whom Meneghelli considered to be the greatest representative of Roman philosophy, did nothing but disseminate and illustrate Greek philosophical thought: he “thought he was free to fly around the Greek schools, but never to leave their confines” (pp. 193–194). Yet, Meneghelli observes, “what penetration he had in capturing the true sense, which was more frequently than not highly complicated and obscure [. . .]!. What agility of spirit, what accurate and perspicacious sight he had to fly swiftly over them all in order to see what they had of their own, in common [. . .]! In him we do not encounter that two-faced language that makes meaning equivocal; nor those contrived consequences, offspring more of artifice than of the principles [. . .]. In him words have an invariable value, inferences follow spontaneously from the premise; he is precise without becoming dry, rich without being prodigal, colourful without abusing mannerisms [. . .]” (pp. 196 and 198). Cicero’s greatness consists, therefore, in knowing how to ‘question’ Greek philosophy, with logical rigour and expository clarity, just as the ancient Egyptians and Orientals had known how to ‘question’ nature.

No other Roman equalled Cicero’s greatness. Even Seneca, whom Meneghelli considered to be one of the few philosophers in the tyrannical imperial age, is, in the field of ethics, “in continual conflict with himself”: “he is at the same time the defender of cowardice and steadfastness, a friend of truth and of lies”. Moreover, his own lifestyle contrasted with his high moral teachings. “He boasts of the strictest virtue” and “frequently covers himself in dishonour”, “coming to an agreement with the lowest of passions”. In short, “he is the writer least suited to maintaining the interests of morals, to spreading their healthy precepts” (pp. 218–219). Even in the field of physics (and his *Naturales quaestiones* are considered to be the “most precious gift that antiquity could have given us”), “he does not seem to have the air of an original thinker, of a discoverer of obscure mysteries, of a creator of new systems” (p. 224).

The names recorded in the annals of Roman and Greek philosophy that follow are merely “tokens of unequivocal mediocrity”: Epictetus, Favorinus, Solinus, Plotinus, Amelius, Herennius and above all Porphyry (“author only of awkwardness and base lies”) did not know how to seek “truth” in nature and hence did not promote the development of philosophy. Even later writers, such as Cassiodorus and Boethius, are considered “very mediocre men” (p. 234). Platonists and Aristotelians “in the unfortunate centuries when Plato and Aristotle were alternately either the norm



for all knowledge or the source of all kinds of error" (pp. 126–127), ended up by "enslaving minds", "a highly fatal consequence for the progress of the sciences" (p. 72).

"The days of superstitious ignorance" finally gave way to "those of happy progress" (p. 154), beginning with Descartes, who "with a brilliant and poetic system broke the chains of the Academy and the Peripatus" (p. 235). Before Descartes, however, other "illustrious men [...] eagerly took up arms against the Scholastics": Roger Bacon, Campanella, Francis Bacon, Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo (the "father of true physics"). But, Meneghelli observes, "far from reorganizing philosophy, they had only the sterile self-satisfaction of revealing the disorder in which it lay" (p. 253, note 249). "And in truth", he continues, "it was too much to hope that they might overturn the idol of the Peripatus because it was not possible simply to demand that the man who had for many centuries practised the language of authority and prejudice, should adopt the severe language of analysis within a brief period of time. A romantic, poetic system was necessary that would upset Aristotle's fame in suddenly gaining the favour of nations; once that step had been taken, it was less difficult to take the next, equally important one, of persuading them that Bacon had pointed out the best path to follow, and that Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo had interrogated, not guessed at, nature. Thus, with his story-telling, Descartes had the merit of marking the dawn of truth, and his system may be called a link between the despotism of opinion and the rights of reason". Furthermore, the "novelistic system" of Descartes consisted precisely in his theorizing "vortices" and "little globes", in an attempt to 'question nature'. After him came the "immortal" and "sublime" Newton, heralding the advent of the moderns. "Who can dare", Meneghelli exclaims, "to set up a comparison between [the ancients, in particular Anaxagoras, and] Newton?" Newton "with most decisive experiments lets you personally verify the fact that a rainbow is merely a prism in which light is decomposed, and shows you the contrast between some prime colours", while Anaxagoras "is content to suspect and assert it" . . . (pp. 90–91).

Revealing the influence of Vico, Meneghelli continues: "The era of the sciences was reserved for a later period, and what we see happen to young boys everyday, in whom rigorous reasoning never exerts its rights until the despotism of over-excited senses ceases to dominate, still had to take place in the child-nations. However, the fewer the means peoples had to throw off the yoke of prejudices, the longer their infancy unavoidably lasted, and the less that was known about the path it was best to follow, the more uncertain the steps of reason unavoidably were. At first the imagination had to create facts and systems at will, and far from going back to the causes of effects and finding universals from particulars by means of analysis, it was natural to set out on the opposite path [. . .]. Hence everyone had to fabricate a world according to his own fancy; theories were born and died as easily as fleeting fantasy creates and destroys its idols at the same time; hypotheses had to be seen as many infallible interpreters of the most elusive mysteries [. . .]; and naturally man boastfully displayed a knowledge of everything when he had not even begun to learn. It was only at the cost of repeated errors that one might suspect that there was a completely different way of discovering truth" (pp. 66–67).

If there is one aspect of the modern age that Abbot Meneghelli does not like, it is that in the century “of such fortunate progress, so many apostles of lies have been applauded a thousand times” (pp. 113–114). In this regard, particular mention is made of Rousseau, “the philosopher of Geneva”, and Voltaire, “the Sophocles of France”, who “longing to stand out, one with the shrewdest eloquence, the other with the fatal weapon of ridicule, declared war on the truth, which was protected by the aegis of the prescriptions of so many centuries and the election of so many nations” (p. 100). He again recalls Bayle’s “original impudence” in wishing to “build a republic of Atheists” and Gassendi’s Epicurean sectarianism wishing “to circumscribe the duration of man to this transient life”. “Apart from very few madmen”, Meneghelli proceeds, “who adopted the delirium of the one, and except for some filthy men who followed the lascivious doctrines of the other, everyone laughed at the fantastic project of the former and detested the base philosophy of the latter” (p. 112). Finally, Meneghelli seems to include even the *Encyclopédie* in his condemnation: “Some of us are deluded that we have great knowledge after having glanced at some article in the Encyclopaedia” (p. 99), he states, thus demonstrating the suspicion that the Catholic Church had always shown towards what could be defined as the ‘modern *summa*’ of human knowledge.

**4.4.4.4** From a methodological point of view, Meneghelli’s historiography is highly judgemental. He did not, in any case, intend to write “annals”, as he believed Brucker, Stanley and, closer to his own times, Deslandes and Appiano Buonafede had done. He was not interested, for example, in imaginary theories about Plato, or in the information he left us on the opinions of ancient philosophers; he was more concerned with verifying whether they had been able to make “decisive and advantageous steps” forward in philosophy. Moreover, he looks more to the “course that remains to be covered” than to the “tortuous one already traversed” (pp. 122–123). In line with this ‘philosophical’ intent, he was not interested in excessive information, “quotations and comparisons”, which he defined as “cruel pleasures of pedantry”, “always” he observes, “a burden on the reader” (p. 87). Thus, for example, when writing of Aristotle, after a brief description of his social and cultural environment, Meneghelli moves on to enquiring into the “causes” of why he became the great and famous philosopher, his “character”, the “progress” he brought to philosophy, the method he adopted, but also the limitations of his thought. “Going back to the causes”, he had written in the preface of his *Saggio*, “and developing them as is fitting is certainly more instructive and more useful, than restricting oneself to the sterile history of some opinions; and studying a way to rediscover the cause of the path followed in the science of reason is far more than being a simple historian of it” (p. 68). For this reason he appeals to the very works of the presented authors in order, to use his own expression, not to have the “manner of a historian who trusts in others” (p. 77).

This ‘philosophical’ perspective means that Meneghelli excludes everything that is not related to philosophy, such as civil wars and the great popular uprisings. “I do not write the history of the crimes of an ignorant populace, the enemy of the man who wishes to educate it, of a rebellious people, merciless towards the man who wishes to reform it”, he wrote, when dealing with the fate of Socrates. “I speak

of the philosopher who gives back to philosophy its rights, to morals their lustre, who shows the way that must be followed in order not to dream in the former and not to lose one's senses in the latter; and I maintain that if Greece had followed in the footsteps of that extraordinary man, its progress in science would have been swift and one would not have seen the tricks of errors and ignorance that lasted until centuries closer to our own" (p. 104).

His history of ancient philosophy is also meant to run counter to the "spirit of system". In physics, the spirit of system "created theories before consulting the voice of nature"; and in history, "it coined opinions before questioning the language of facts", and the "language of facts" for him constitutes the "most decisive documents", the "most respectable authorities", which cannot be contested (pp. 170–171). Guided by the spirit of system, Meneghelli writes, he could, for example, have joined "the current of those who only wish to see in Cicero the language of the most obvious scepticism [...]. But I will not take sides, neither are weak conjectures my trade" (p. 203).

Thus, it is not surprising that Meneghelli's enquiry into the principles and causes of the progress or regress of philosophy is based on an abundant philological and bibliographical apparatus. His critical and theoretical intentions are supported by as many as 249 "annotations", consisting mainly of an indication of sources, but also brief discussions of a historiographical nature not only with those who were by then considered to be the fathers of modern historiography of philosophy, but also with his contemporaries. Most of the time he contested the French historiographers Rapin, Condorcet, Bailly, Montucla, Lalande, Le Moine d'Orgival and Barthélémy, but he was also opposed to the German Meiners and above all to the Italians Appiano Buonafede and Girolamo Tiraboschi.

**4.4.5** Shortly after its publication, the *Saggio storico-critico sopra la filosofia della Grecia e del Lazio* was presented in an anonymous review of the Paduan *Giornale dell'italiana letteratura*: "The aim [of this author] is not [...] to report all the various opinions of the philosophers [...], but to observe the progress of philosophical doctrines, setting them in their correct light, and to point out the obligation we have towards those great ancient men, who were our masters" (GIL, 1806, CII, p. 238). After then describing the content of the work, the reviewer goes on to praise the author's "upright and unbiased judgement", the "truth [that is the goodness] of his system", the brevity of his style, his "undoubted erudition", the "uncommon capacity to refer to the various systems with elegance and with nobility of style" and, above all, his making those "luminous truths that may rightly be sustained" emerge from the history of philosophy. The reviewer concludes: "In truth, this subject has been treated by many; but he knew how to reproduce it with happy brevity, adding new ideas and giving it such order that it presents at a glance a clear and united history, which previously was to be found scattered around separately in various authors" (p. 243).

In point of fact, this is the only review of Meneghelli's work, and there is no echo of it in the historiography of philosophy of the period. In practice, scholars could turn to far more complete works in terms of both scholarship and historical design, such as those by Tiedemann (*Griechenlands erste Philosophen*,

Leipzig, 1780) and Meiners (*Geschichte des Ursprungs, Fortgangs und Verfalls der Wissenschaften in Griecheland und Rom*, Lemgo, 1781–1782), the latter of which had been translated immediately into various European languages, including Italian (Venice, 1803). However, the reputation of Meneghelli depends above all firstly on his long friendship with Antonio Rosmini, who held him very dear from the time when he was a student at Padua,<sup>22</sup> secondly on his fierce polemic with Ugo Foscolo, who judged him a “poor creature” (Zaccaria, *L’abate Antonio Meneghelli*, p. 159), and finally on the brief words of Niccolò Tommaseo, who described “Professor Meneghelli” as a “man”, who “in modest fortune”, lived “generously as a friend of beauty”.<sup>23</sup> In reality, despite illustrious friends or enemies, and a prolific literary and academic career Meneghelli did not manage to enter the wider cultural circle, and he ended up as a disregarded, provincial man of letters.

**4.4.6** On Meneghelli’s life and works: J. Bellomo, ‘Necrologia’, *Il vaglio. Giornale di scienze, lettere, arti*, IX, no. 51, 21st December 1844, p. 407; I. Cantù, *L’Italia scientifica contemporanea* (Milan, 1844), pp. 298–300; *La mia vita. Memorie postume del professore Abb. Antonio Meneghelli* (Padua, 1845); E. Saint-Maurice Cabany, *Notice sur l’abbé Antonio Meneghelli* (Paris, 1846<sup>2</sup>); F. Scopoli, *Cenno cronologico del professor abate Meneghelli* (Padua, 1844); L. Briguglio, ‘I problemi della storia nell’800 veneto’, *Archivio Veneto*, s. V, vol. XCVI (1972), pp. 119–123; V. Zaccaria, ‘L’abate Antonio Meneghelli e una polemica col Foscolo’, *Atti e Memorie dell’Accademia Patavina di scienze lettere ed arti*, vol. LXXXV (1972–1973), Cl. di sc. mor., lett. ed arti, pp. 147–165; A. Maggiolo, *I soci dell’Accademia patavina dalla sua fondazione (1599)* (Padua, 1983), p. 198; L. Montobbio, ‘Notizie sull’abate Antonio Meneghelli primo direttore del *Giornale Euganeo*’, *Atti e memorie dell’Accademia Galileiana di scienze lettere ed arti*, CXI (1998–1999), pp. 101–118; DBI, LXXIII (Rome, 2009), pp. 452–453.

<sup>22</sup>On the friendship that joined Rosmini and Meneghelli, cf. G. Radice, *Annali di Antonio Rosmini Serbati*, vol. 2: 1817–1822 (Milan, 1968), pp. 27, 29, and 151. vol. 3 of the same *Annali* (Milan, 1970), pp. 495–496, recalls how Meneghelli had dedicated himself to writing a eulogy, to be read at the Paduan Academy, in memory of Carlo (1758–1827), Antonio’s cousin, renowned author of the *Storia di Milano* (Milan, 1820).

<sup>23</sup>N. Tommaseo, *Gasparo Gozzi, Venezia e l’Italia de’ suoi tempi*, in Id., *Storia civile nella letteraria. Studii* (Rome, Turin and Florence, 1872), p. 254.

# Chapter 5

## The Historiography of Philosophy: From School Textbooks to Works for a Wider Readership

Ilario Tolomio

### Introduction

#### (a) “Histories” for schools

In the late eighteenth century, the historiography of philosophy in Italy presented not only treatises dealing broadly with the subject of philosophy, but also a fairly large number of works produced for schools. These constitute a form of minor historiography of a propaedeutic or moralistic and educational nature. In eighteenth-century Italy, schools responded to the traditional demand for a rhetorical, literary and intellectual, and ethical and religious education. In particular, as far as philosophy was concerned, logic or dialectic was dominant in the higher educational curricula, in line with the gradual affirmation of Locke’s epistemological doctrines. Logic and dialectic constituted the first year of the course on philosophy, which then continued with lessons on physics and metaphysics. The study of metaphysics was followed by that of moral philosophy, which was mainly based on Aristotle’s doctrines. Only in the late eighteenth century did the new treatises on moral philosophy that were then appearing start to be used in schools, in particular the *Filosofia morale* (Venice, 1754) by Lodovico Antonio Muratori, which presented ancient wisdom in an accessible style.

It is within this framework that we find historical treatises, serving as an introduction to the systematic study of the different ‘parts’ of philosophy. One cannot, therefore, expect from this production any relevant historiographical discussions or any new interpretations. In general, apart from the different emphasis given by

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the various authors, due mainly to their apologetic intent, all the works rely on the historiographical tradition that recognised Brucker and Buddeus as its masters. This didactic literature is not, however, so mechanical and uniform that one cannot identify in it two sources of inspiration: one closely tied to scholastic aims and another which, on the contrary, tends to escape the close confines of the school and become more open on an ethical, educational, and social level. Some of the works that are part of this trend assumed a certain degree of autonomy from the schools: these were brief accounts that could also be read by the general public, explaining, for example, either that the history of philosophy is more instructive than civil history (L. Gemelli), or that philosophy, as its very history demonstrates, is always something to be fundamentally avoided because true wisdom can only be found in religion (G.S. Gerdil).

Cesare Baldinotti's 'Historiae philosophicae prima et expeditissima adumbratio' is a strictly scholastic work. As a foreword to a treatise on logic for university students, it restricts itself to presenting the various periods in the history of philosophy somewhat in the fashion of a chronicle (see below, 5.1). Other works were similar in tone and structure to Baldinotti's. The first, written around the middle of the century (1741), was by Ugo Sanminiati, a Florentine patrician, "auditor of philosophy" at the Piarists' college in his city, was entitled precisely 'Historia philosophiae' and included as a preface to a treatise on physics: *Praecipua philosophicae historiae naturalis scientiae doctrinaeque de motu corporum capita* (Florence, 1741); the *Historia philosophiae* fills pp. 1–26. It is a brief survey of 22 paragraphs presenting the historical development of philosophy from Adam to the author's own time. We also find elements of the history of philosophy in several publications of this type, such as the *Philosophia peripatetica* that the Conventual Franciscan Scotist Giuseppe Antonio Ferrari (†1776) published "against ancient and more recent philosophers" (Venice, 1754<sup>2</sup>, 3 vols). Here the history of philosophy is not only present in the preliminary section ('Philosophiae praeludium', pp. 1–3), but also in the 'Dissertatio proemialis', divided into five "questions". Historiographical commonplaces that had become rare in mid-eighteenth century historiography, even in Italy, are reiterated: Adam is still considered to be the "proto-philosopher", and his family the first school of philosophy.

It was not only treatises on physics based on the Aristotelian tradition that contained brief but well-structured surveys (*conspectus*) of the history of philosophy, but also those that drew inspiration from Newton's physics and Galileo's experimentalism. The latter indeed continued not only to offer outlines of the history of philosophy but also to figuratively converse with the philosophers of the past. An exemplary work in this sense is the *Scienza della natura* (Venice, 1750, 2 vols) by the Somascan Father, Giovanni Maria Della Torre (1713–1782), a librarian of Charles III of Spain, then teacher at the archiepiscopal grammar school in Naples, an expert in microscopy and Vesuvian vulcanology. The work opens with an *excursus* into the history of philosophy with a singular system of periodization: "There are three states in which one may consider Physics and Metaphysical doctrines. The first starts with the beginning of the world, embraces the entire Greek reign and lasts until almost the end of the sixth century after the foundation of Rome [...]. The second

starts in the seventh century of Rome and lasts until the fourteenth century after the birth of Christ. The third starts in this period and lasts until our own eighteenth century, when we now live" (I, p. IX). The antediluvians "applied themselves in a rough manner, to practical truths". The Barbarians (Hebrews, Chaldeans, Persians, Indians, Arabs, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Gauls, Britons, Germans, early Romans, Scythians, Thracians, and Getae) made great progress in the study of "spiritual, and corporeal, substances", "but their Philosophy was [...] a series of separate doctrines, which were accepted by tradition without subjecting them to any rigorous examination" (I, pp. IX–X). Hence "we owe the true origins of Philosophy to the Greeks", who in the course of time were able to organize philosophy into parts and "establish well-founded Systems". The different philosophical systems or sects are then described in the usual manner based on Diogenes Laertius. Della Torre also returns to the history of philosophy in the second part of his work, devoted to "particular physics": opinions concerning the various topics of "particular physics" are reviewed from the time of Parmenides and his disciple Melissus to the modern philosophers (including the medieval Scholastics). "A formless container" was one way in which this work was described, one in which, indeed, room is made, whatever their merit, for nearly all ancient and modern philosophers, first and foremost Newton and Galileo, but also Leibniz, Gassendi and Descartes, a container "large enough, however, to include the results of Newtonian synthesis by means of short-cuts and simplifications" (Casini, *Newton e la coscienza europea*, p. 222).

We can also mention the histories of philosophy that Giuseppe Pavesio from Piedmont normally used as introductions to his fairly successful school textbooks on philosophy: *Elementa logices* (Turin, 1793); *Elementa metaphysices* (Turin, 1794); and *Elementa philosophiae moralis* (Turin, 1795). Each of these texts opens with a 'Synopsis historica' concerning logic (pp. XLVI–LXXVII), metaphysics (pp. I–LII), and moral philosophy (pp. I–XXXIX), which together constitute a true general history of philosophy, a "pithy, but well-reasoned, history", an "erudite and well-painted picture", as it was judged by the *Efemeridi letterarie di Roma* (1794, XXIII, p. 174). Similar in structure and function were the 'Prolegomena' or the 'Praefationes' that Cristoforo Sarti, professor of philosophy at the University of Pisa, prefaced to his works on logic, psychology, and theology published a few years earlier: *Dialecticarum institutiones* (Lucca, 1787); *Psicologiae specimen* (Lucca, 1791); and *Specimen theologiae naturalis* (Lucca, 1791). Some elements of the history of philosophy are also found in the *Institutiones logicae et metaphysicae* (Rome, 1778, 2 vols) by the Conventual Franciscan Giuseppe Tamagna, professor of dogmatic and scholastic theology at the "Sapienza" University in Rome. The general intention of the work is openly apologetic ("mainly aimed to counter the various sophisms of unbelievers", the ELR wrote, 1778, VII, p. 185), and precisely in order to reach this goal, Tamagna used the history of philosophy not only as an introduction (I, pp. 1–9), but also in the body of the work. The ancient and modern philosophical schools are thus revisited with the aim of pointing out their absurdities, erroneous opinions, and aberrations of thought throughout the centuries. Here there is ruthless criticism of the moderns: Hobbes, Leibniz, and, above all, Spinoza. The latter's pantheistic doctrine and his theory of natural right, which

derived from Hobbes, are condemned (I, pp. 220–222; II, pp. 10–13), since they both deny the ‘ethicality’ of human actions in both the natural and the social environment. The custom of using these elements of the history of philosophy as prefaces to treatises of a theoretical nature was to last for decades in Italian school textbooks, from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, as can be seen, for example, in the *Novum systema ethices seu moralis philosophiae* (Rome, 1819) by Reverend Leopoldo Sebastiani, where there is also a ‘*Historia moralis philosophiae*’ (pp. 2–22), from pre-Greek origins to the latest developments in the eighteenth century (Hutcheson, Hume).

The *Compendio di storia della filosofia* written by Father Francesco Soave as a preface to his *Istituzioni di logica, metafisica ed etica* (1791), one of the most widely used school texts at the end of the century, cannot be considered scholastic in the strictest sense: it was still popular in the mid-nineteenth century, and was continually republished and used in Italian schools, above all in Lombardy and the Veneto. Intending to serve not only schools but also ‘life’, Soave addresses a wider public in his typical moralizing tone, aiming to educate rather than to instruct. The various ages of philosophy are all subject to his historiographical judgement, which is, however, temperate and mainly meant to highlight the ethical and religious aspect of philosophical experience.

Let us look now at the second group of histories of philosophy, which, created within and intended for schools, nevertheless manage to go beyond these confines and adapt themselves to a wider public. The most significant example is the *Elementi di storia filosofica* (Castellamare, 1793) by the Capuchin Father, Lodovico Gemelli, for whom the history of philosophy is to be placed above all other histories, particularly civil history, since the latter is the “history of men’s crimes” whereas the history of philosophy is the “history of human knowledge”. Despite his wealth of knowledge of German historiography of philosophy (above all Brucker and Buddeus), Gemelli does not seem to be aware of the new historiographical phase that had begun in the north, inspired by intentions that were philological rather than theoretical, and which reduced – sometimes radically – that part of the history of philosophy concerning the pre-Greek peoples which had attracted so much attention in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries on the part of men of learning and antiquarians. The structure of his work is therefore traditional, even if we can see some traces of the Neapolitan Enlightenment, which tended to be more aware of economic, legalistic, and moralizing themes than those of an epistemological or metaphysical nature. For him it was important to demonstrate that the history of philosophy becomes a *magistra vitae*, as indeed it had always been – he believed – since the earliest convictions of mankind.

The *Istoria delle scuole dei filosofi* by Cardinal Giacinto Sigismondo Gerdil runs very much along the same lines, but with an added concern of an apologetic nature. It is a work written mainly for the religious ethical training and the general education of the Prince of Savoy, to whom Gerdil was appointed tutor. The continuous series of philosophical schools over the course of history induces one not to follow the philosophers, who have always displayed contrasts and divisions, but rather to follow religion, particularly that taught by the Church of Rome. Yet behind



these theories of an apologetic nature there lies a 'modern' intention: to recover in Descartes, and above all in his followers, particularly Malebranche, the spiritualistic Agostinian inspiration that, according to Gerdil, could revitalize the philosophical orientation of the Roman Church at the end of the eighteenth century. The work by Francesco Berengher (*Abbozzo di un quadro storico filosofico*, in five uneven volumes, from 1810 to 1819) can also be placed in this group. The end of the Napoleonic period and the beginning of the Restoration constitute the historical and cultural background to this work whose contents are distinctly poor in information and critical spirit.

(b) *Populist literature*

Alongside these didactic, or more generally educational, works there is the multifarious field of popular works, which reflect the cultural revisions and the debates initiated by the Enlightenment. Thus philosophy and its history came to interest not only the schools, entrusted to the modern institutions of the Jesuits, Barnabites, Somascans, and Piarists, and the last indomitable Peripatetics, but also cultured society, that is to say the ruling class of the nobility and the bourgeoisie. There was a gradual dissemination of new cultural attitudes in tune with what the *philosophes* were teaching. Culture, and philosophy in particular, circulated above all in newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets that were frequently critical not only of the Roman Church but also of 'non-enlightened' rulers. The most emblematic newspaper was *Il Caffè*, which was only published for a short period of four semesters (from June, 1764, to June, 1766) but was reprinted several times; it was fully representative of the fervent climate of the cultural renewal of the Enlightenment in Lombardy. Its pages were not restricted to lengthy series of reviews of works, as had been the style of the eighteenth-century reviews, but were devoted to discussions and the examination of problems, passing on to the general public the knowledge of the learned and the erudite and innovating the historiographical concepts of philosophy themselves.

"In the age of the Renaissance," wrote Pietro Verri, for example, a guiding force of *Il Caffè*, "anyone who had read Plato and knew how to repeat a few sentences from his works by heart, whether they made any sense or not, was a great Philosopher". "Anyone who remembered Aristotle's categories, who knew how to dispute on the universal *a parte rei*, on quiddity, on *blictri* and on other such nonsense and deliria of human weakness" was then honoured "with the title of philosopher". The concept of philosophy continued to be more or less the same in the sixteenth century, but "towards the end of that century came the great Galileo, the pride of our country, the great forerunner of Newton. [. . .]. He was the first to shake off the yoke of that science of mere words that tyrannised the minds of Men and which vaunted the name of Philosophy without either loving or seeking truth". The seventeenth century witnessed the introduction "little by little of the spirit of Philosophy into Europe; the Great Lord Verulam incited the English to throw off the yoke; the immortal Galileo in our Italy had provided no lesser an impulse for our minds [. . .]. Finally, there came Descartes, a sublime genius, whose very errors are worthy of veneration [. . .]. Philosophy assumed a new aspect throughout Europe

[...]. Schools waged a stubborn war against this new type of philosophizing, but finally reason won the day, and a Man who thought he could explain all the phenomena of the Universe by means of the two principles of matter and motion alone was called a Philosopher". Today, Verri continues, philosophy has made new steps forward, thanks above all to the "great Newton"; the "philosopher" has become more cautious, even if one can see the triumph of the "philosophical spirit" that has extended to all human knowledge, including that of "belles-lettres" (*Il Caffè*, second semester, 1764–1765, ed. Silvestri, Milan, 1804, pp. 151–155).

Philosophy has thus become a subject for everyone. A work typical of this trend is *Newtonianismo per le dame*, which Francesco Algarotti wrote around the middle of the century, a popular work on Newton's famous physical and philosophical principles, addressed to all those who frequented the eighteenth-century *salons*. Of lesser fame, but of equal significance, was *La chimica per le donne*, a work published in Venice in 1796 by Giuseppe Compagnoni. In the second half of the eighteenth century many works for the female *salon* appeared, which aimed at popularizing knowledge. We thus find the rather lightweight *Filosofismo delle belle* (Venice, 1753) by the Venetian "abate de Cataneo", in which philosophy 'of' and 'for' women is more concerned with beauty than her culture. Far more demanding from the point of view of philosophical teaching is another similar work by an anonymous author, *La filosofia per le dame* (Venice, 1777), in three volumes, each of which is divided into 12 *soirées*, in which the author imagines a count teaching philosophy to a marquise. Much of the work is devoted to "general physics" (vol. II) and "particular physics" (vol. III), according to Enlightenment taste, but in the first volume we find a little of all that a philosopher knows, including the history of philosophy, explained very schematically. All ancient and modern philosophy is reduced to three schools: the dogmatists, the acataleptics, and the sceptics. The Peripatetics, Stoics, Thomists, and Scotists were dogmatists; and the Academics, Pyrrhonists, Gassendists, Cartesians, and Newtonians were acataleptics. "But the person who illuminated and showed the way to all those who cultivated physics in Europe after Newton", the anonymous author concludes, "was Galileo Galilei, a Florentine Patrician, who with the aid of Mathematics restored Philosophy and either renewed it himself or convinced others to renew it" (vol. I, p. 11).

It is against this background that we can view the many poetic and didactic compositions devoted to philosophy and its history, the product of that love of versification so typical of the Italian eighteenth century. We can mention here the renowned *Ritratti poetici, storici e critici* by Appiano Buonafede, where, as we shall see, particular attention is given to philosophers, and the little-known poem by the Barnabite Marco Antonio Cristofori (ca. 1720–1800), *I sentimenti esterni, ed interni del corpo umano* (published in the *Componimenti poetici per le felicissime nozze di sue Ecc. Marco Andrea Pisani, e Caterina da Mula* (Padua, 1755), pp. xi–xxxv), which expounds Locke's widely-known epistemological theory in poetical form, and yet another significant short poem by Carlo Gastone della Torre di Rezzonico, *L'origine delle idee* (published in the *Raccolta di poemi didascalici e di poemetti varj scritti nel secolo XVIII* (Milan, 1828), pp. 251–267), dedicated to Condillac.

It was, moreover, very common to celebrate an occasion, particularly a wedding, or to praise a ruler, with a poetical composition in which a philosophical vocation was combined with a literary or aesthetic one, adopting styles that varied from the idealizing canons of Arcadia to the sensitive, sentimental tones typical of the later Enlightenment. A distinct number of general histories of philosophy in verse can also be found within this particular literary form. First and foremost among these was a work by the Sicilian nobleman, Tommaso Campailla (1668–1740), set out in the fifth canto of his philosophical poem *L'Adamo, ovvero il mondo creato*, the first incomplete version of which was presented to the public at the beginning of the century (Mazarino and Catania, 1709). The complete edition was published in Messina in 1728, and later posthumously in Milan in 1744 (ed. G. Rossino, Verona, 1998). This fifth canto of the *Adamo* has been called a sort of “critical history of philosophy” (Garin, II, p. 881). Here the impious Aristotle, an atheist who denied divine providence, is bitterly condemned, while there is praise of the moderns Telesio, Campanella, Gassendi, and above all Descartes and his school, of which Michelangelo Fardella is cited as one of the greatest representatives. This epic didactic composition in octaves constitutes a true general history of philosophy. Adam, the first-born man, a symbol of good nature that has not yet been corrupted, is led by the archangel Raphael to contemplate the truths and beauties of the created universe, one by one. The fifth canto, entitled ‘Biblioteca’, is dedicated precisely to the contemplation of the works written by the various philosophers throughout the centuries. Starting from the first wise men, then proceeding to the Greek and Roman philosophers, the reader gradually arrives at the thinkers of the modern age, without, however, ignoring those of the Middle Ages (of Albert the Great it is said “the world will never see a more expert mind” [stanza 26]; Raymond Lull is “inimitable” [stanza 27]; Boethius’ words are “profound” [stanza 27]; and Thomas Aquinas was “great”, although his work led to “Aristotelian tyranny” through Scholasticism [stanzas 38 and 40]).

The poet from Brescia, Giuseppe Colpani (1739–1822), also left us a history of philosophy in verse. In one of his many scientific didactic poems entitled *La filosofia* (in *Opere*, [no place and no date of publication], I, pp. 5–149) he retraces the entire course of the history of philosophy in order to draw the traditional teachings from it: “Of august, immortal Philosophy/the history I shall tell”, whose origins (perhaps here there is an echo of Vico) are to be sought “in the oldest of times”, when the “fierce and wild wandering peoples became united in society” (pp. 12 and 16). Of the Greeks he appreciates Plato more than Aristotle, the Academy more than the “dark Peripate” (pp. 26–29). The entire historiographical structure of this short didactic poem is typical of the Enlightenment. The centuries of the Middle Ages are defined as “barbaric” and “fuliginous shadows”, when the “tyrannous Peripate” and the “great squalor” of Scholasticism were predominant (pp. 38 and 41–43). The moderns Copernicus, Brahe, Kepler, Bacon, Torricelli, Pascal, Boyle, and above all “the immortal Galileo” were those who renewed the study of Nature thanks to their recourse to “trusty Experience” (p. 44). On the other hand, “the great Descartes” was to abandon this path since he first doubted everything and then “thought he knew everything”, wanting to be the “supreme legislator of the physical worlds”, and

ending up by presenting a “Cartesian universe” instead of the true universe (pp. 49–51). After Descartes, we have the “wise” Locke, who “championed with invincible force” the role of the senses, from which “all ideas are born” (p. 53). And again, in this rapid succession of moderns, we have Malebranche, Leibniz, and Newton, the “immortal” and “venerable philosopher” (pp. 58–59). The eighteenth century is described as the “century of the thinker”, which produced so many “sublime minds” (p. 67).

There is another general history of philosophy in verse in the second group of a hundred sonnets in the *Sonetti storici e filosofici del conte Girolamo Murari Dalla Corte Mantovano Accademico Fiorentino* (Guastalla, 1789). Its didactic aim can be clearly read in the preface: “Drawing on the sources of history and philosophy, the poets open the door to the enjoyment of the treasures of useful knowledge and perpetuate the eternal glory of being considered masters of entire nations” (p. 1). This poetic composition is based on the works of Appiano Buonafede (cf. below, Chap. 6), as the author himself states in his dedication to “the Florentine Academics”. The account starts with the “antediluvians” and ends with Antonio Genovesi, “restorer of dialectics and metaphysics in Italy” (p. 208). Both the principal theories and the periodization, and the enthusiastic tone used not only for religion but also for the achievements made in physics and the theory of knowledge (Locke) in the modern age derive from Buonafede. This attitude was shared by most Italian intellectuals, whether men of the church or laymen, religious or not, since the Enlightenment mentality had pervaded all sectors, including those most closely linked to Catholic tradition and education.

Celebrating Newton, Orazio Arrighi Landini (1718–1775), a Florentine by birth but a Venetian by choice, also came to write a general history of philosophy in verse. In the second book of *Il tempio della filosofia* (Venice, 1755), he imagines that “decorating the temple” of Newton’s tomb are “the faces and the schools of the philosophers”: first the sages of the barbarian nations, then the learned schools, the Greek and the Roman philosophers, the medieval Augustine, Aquinas and Scotus, and finally the modern Copernicus, Brahe, Malebranche, Leibniz, and very many others, all paying homage to the supreme master who lies in the tomb under the vigilant eye of Experience (p. 45). In support of this verse account, there is an extensive commentary at the end of the book (including, among other things, a family tree of all the ancient philosophical sects, from the Ionic to the Eclectic), where the author displays a sound knowledge of modern historiography of philosophy.

The works by Benedetto Stay, Tommaso Natale, and Gian Maria Ortes are particular rather than general histories of philosophy in the form of poetic compositions. Benedetto Stay (1714–1801), an ecclesiastic from Ragusa (now called Dubrovnik), was the author of extremely long didactic poems, above all on Descartes’ philosophy: the *Philosophiae versibus traditae libri sex*. This work was published in Venice in 1744, reprinted in Rome in 1747, and again in Venice in 1749. Here the account of Descartes’ physical and cosmological thought is combined with praise for the great French philosopher (1749 ed., pp. 94–95). A second, complex philosophical poem is dedicated to another Enlightenment ‘icon’, Isaac Newton: this is the *Philosophiae*

*recentioris versibus traditae libri X*, published in Rome over a period of time that covers nearly half a century (1755–1792, 3 vols). These two poetic compositions aroused the enthusiasm of Melchiorre Cesarotti, for whom Stay's poems not only recalled the far more famous poem by Lucretius but even surpassed it (cf. Natali, I, p. 475; but also see the letter from Cesarotti to Luca Stulli, dated 29th April, 1803, in *Opere*, vol. XXXVIII: *Dell'Epistolario*, vol. IV, Pisa, 1813, pp. 107–109; and also GL, 1792, LXXXVIII, pp. 23–47). The poem on Newton was copiously annotated, commented on, and enriched with supplements by Ruggero Boscovich (1725–1787), the famous mathematician, scientist, and philosopher, who was also born in Ragusa.

The poetic work by Tommaso Natale, Marquis of Monterosato (Palermo, 1753–1819), was also dedicated to a modern philosopher. Abandoning Latin, his *Filosofia Leibniziana esposta in versi toscani* (Florence, 1756) managed to reach a wider public and disseminated Leibniz's thought in the Italian *salons* more easily. In the foreword, Natale states that he, too, writes didactic poetry, that is in order “to raise Poetry from the trivial and the mud”, “giving it more worthy and suitable subjects” (pp. 6–7). Leibniz's philosophy was well suited to be the subject of a poetic canto: unlike “that unintelligible, rancid doctrine” of Scholastic philosophy, “it is so replete with clarity, its ideas are so lacking in confusion and are analysed in such a subtle and accurate way that it is not difficult to explain it all by means of verse” (p. 14). The “mob of Scholastics”, “minds accustomed to seeking only words and shadows”, hurled abuse at Leibniz's doctrines, considered dangerous to religion. In fact, it is sufficient to “reduce matters to clear and distinct notions, to effect a correct analysis of them, to explain them well and to establish the terms, and I am certain that many of the clouds, which prevent us from seeing truth clearly, will be dispersed” (pp. 18–21). After this preface, highly polemical towards critics of Leibniz, the treatment fills five books, dedicated respectively to the “principles” (of knowledge, sufficient reason, and contradiction), God, the monads, matter, and ethics, offering a brief, accessible *summa* of Leibniz's rather difficult philosophy.

With the *Saggio della filosofia degli antichi, esposto in versi per musica* (Venice, 1757) by the Venetian Abbot Gian Maria Ortes (1713–1790) we leave the modern philosophers to discuss the ancient ones. Here the author has recourse to the technique proper to musical poetic composition: *cori, inviti, odi, recitativi, arie, epodi, corone, invocazioni, preghiere, preludi*. The intention of the work is to “prove how inferior the ancients were to the moderns in every type of philosophy”. This theme is particularly explicit in the third part, which shows “how inferior the ancients were to us in treating final causes, the duration of the world, and the immortality of the reasonable soul”. As far as theodicy is concerned, on the other hand, the ancients were equal to the moderns in everything because they were aware of the “inexistence of their gods”. In physical cosmological theories, the subject of the second part, even though the ancients were able to intuit the laws of motion, the plurality of worlds, universal gravity, and so on, they were not able to equal the moderns, as the moderns possess “better eye-glasses”, that is to say, better tools (‘Avvertimento’, pp. 5–6).

(c) *Other historiographic contributions*

The *Commentationes Laertianae* (Rome, 1788) by Abbot Ignazio Rossi, which deals with Diogenes Laertius' *Lives* from both a philological and a hermeneutic point of view, is, on the other hand, neither a school textbook nor a work written to popularize knowledge. Referring to the latest edition of Laertius' work by Marcus Meibom (Amsterdam, 1692; cf. *Models*, I, p. 158), in 102 paragraphs he rectifies the text and the Latin version, corrects its numerous errors in form, explains its "difficult and obscure passages", and shows "the incoherence and falsity" of certain interpretations (ELR, 1788, xvii, p. 409). In particular, Rossi criticises Meibom for having preferred the Latin translation by Traversari to the far superior one by Tommaso Aldobrandini, for having provided a Greek text that was more corrupt than that of the editions by Henri Estienne and Aldobrandini, and for having on occasion changed the text arbitrarily without the necessary reference to the manuscripts. In reality, Rossi's work is not a new edition of the *Lives of the Philosophers*; it is rather just a collection of 'materials' (observations, specifications, new readings of the text) for an updated edition of Laertius' *Lives*, for which the century of the Enlightenment felt a need as a hundred years had passed since Meibom's edition.

As far as the dissemination of culture is concerned, works of an encyclopaedic nature deserve a special place. The *Encyclopédie*, the *opus maximum* of the French Enlightenment, had become a cultural ideal for the whole of Europe. In Italy it paved the way for the invasion of French culture, becoming a "source of knowledge", as militant journalism well expressed it (cf. *Gazzetta urbana veneta*, 3rd October, 1795, p. 625). In this spirit, it was immediately reprinted in Lucca in the original French from 1758 to 1776 by Ottaviano Diodati, a very modest polygraph, yet a passionate scholar of the French Enlightenment. A few years later, from 1770 to 1778, a third edition of the *Encyclopédie*, in 33 volumes *in folio*, was published in Livorno. The masterpiece of the *Lumières* was introduced into Italy not only in its original alphabetic form but also in a "methodical" form, "by order of subjects", that is to say, in a series of thematic dictionaries in which the original project was recast. The publication of the *Enciclopedia metodica* in Padua at the Episcopal Seminary Typography began in 1784, 2 years after the French edition was embarked upon. The Italian edition, however, lacked the *Philosophy* section, containing merely the history of philosophy written by Naigeon (on whom see above, Sect. 1.4). The contents of this section seemed too much like the work of an unbeliever to the eyes of the Paduan ecclesiastical publishers, although they were not insensitive to the fascination exerted by Enlightenment ideals. Even Tiraboschi, one of the collaborators on the enterprise, had criticised Naigeon in one of his letters, dated 22nd March, 1783, to the chief editor, Giovanni Coi: "The *Philosophie* class is full of impiety, and in it one can see the explanations of all the most monstrous systems, without any confutation [...]. It seems to me that this class should be rewritten entirely, for the additional reason that one would not be permitted, I think, to reprint it, and even if it were permitted, it would be of no honour to this Seminary" (Tiraboschi, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, Venice, 1824–1825, vol. IX [XXVII], pp. XLV–XLVI).

But Catholic Italy planned its own encyclopaedia in the second half of the eighteenth century: the work of the Venetian Alessandro Zorzi (1747–1779). In 1776, this young abbot, who had left the Jesuit order, published the *Prospetto di una Nuova Enciclopedia Italiana* in Ferrara, and, in 1779, the *Prodromo della Nuova Enciclopedia Italiana* appeared in Siena with the general plan of the work and the plans for the individual categories (mathematics, physics, medicine, metaphysics, jurisprudence, fine arts, history, mechanical arts, and trades). Thus a vast work was arranged to equal Diderot's and D'Alembert's great *Encyclopédie*. Among the collaborators were Spallanzani, Malfatti, Giordano Riccati, and even Girolamo Tiraboschi. All that is left of the enterprise, however, is the prelude, because of the tragic "fate of unfortunate Italy", as Tiraboschi expressed it in the *Nuovo Giornale de' Letterati*, where "the greatest works contemplated here, which might render her name increasingly famous and glorious, run the risk of coming to nothing for one misfortune or another, and of being reduced to nothing, almost upon birth," (NGLI, 1780, XXI, pp. p. 1). The untimely death of Zorzi (in his early 30s) once again thwarted Italy's attempt to surpass triumphant French culture. However, some light can be shed on Zorzi's plan thanks to the *Prodromo*, which with regard to historiography included "a plan for the construction of complementary histories, a plan that, starting with Bacon, moves towards a wholly modern reality" (Raimondi, *Letteratura e scienza*, p. 299). This was a historiographical ideal inspired by the *Encyclopédie*, but which at the same time was intended to demonstrate the 'freshness' of Italy, which could also boast a new culture and a new science.

The *Dizionario istruttivo per la vita civile*, by Count Antonio Montanari, from Verona, which ends inexplicably with the second volume, also belongs to the encyclopaedic genre (tome I: A,B,C, tome II: D,E,F, Verona, 1779). This work draws on Bayle but above all on the *Encyclopédie*. Philosophers had a particular place in this *Dizionario*, first of all under the entry 'Philosophy' and then again under the entry devoted to 'Modern philosophy': two short histories of philosophy, one on antiquity and the other on the modern age. For Montanari the first philosophers were not the Greek Thales or Pythagoras but the descendants of Cain, the Hebrew patriarchs and Moses himself, described as a "sacred historian" and "philosopher" (II, p. 411). Leaving aside "barbarian" philosophy and the "poet philosophers", he immediately moves on to the "Greek systematic philosophers", that is, the pre-Socratic naturalists. He then reviews the entire history of Greek philosophy up to its decline, and alludes to the philosophical developments of the following centuries: from Greece to Egypt, from Egypt to the Arabs, from the Arabs to the medieval barbarians, and, finally, the splendour of the Renaissance. It seems that the Romans were deliberately excluded from this account since, in being mere "followers of the Greeks", "they did not invent any new systems and followed in the footsteps of the Pythagorean school in particular, or the Sect of the Academics" (II, p. 466). The entry "Modern philosophy" does not run along historical lines but proceeds rather by 'portraits': from Descartes to D'Alembert, and between them Malebranche, Cudworth, Galileo, Spinoza, Hobbes, Bayle, Locke, Newton, Leibniz, Christian Thomasius, Wolff, Montesquieu, Helvétius, Rousseau, Genovesi, d'Holbac, and Antonio Valsecchi.

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On B. Stay: NL, 1745, VI, cols 118–121; SLI, 1758, XII, pp. 119–133; GL, 1792, LXXXVIII, pp. 23–47; ELR, 1792, XXI, pp. 217–220 and 225–230; MT, 1747, December, pp. 2420–2447 and 2525–2542; 1756, January, pp. 80–108; 1761, May, pp. 1232–1254; June, pp. 1393–1411; September, pp. 2117–2132; November, pp. 2714–2728; Fabroni, XIX, pp. 7–32; BUAM, LV, pp. 30–37; Capone Braga, II/1, p. 60; Natali, I, pp. 475 and 504; I.L. Tacconi, *I poemi filosofici latini di Benedetto Stay, il Lucrezio Ragusino* (Zara, 1934); Garin, pp. 914 and 992; S. D'Agostino, 'From Bošković's Supplements to the Poem of Benedikt Stay', *Synthesis Philosophica*, IV (1989), pp. 641–646.

On T. Natale: ELR, 1773, II, pp. 164–167; BUAM suppl., LXXV, pp. 306–307; G. Guerzoni, *Il terzo Rinascimento. Corso di letteratura italiana* (Verona, 1876), pp. 444–480; O. Ziino, *Tommaso Natale e il pensiero pubblicistico in Sicilia nel secolo 18°* (Cortona, 1931); Natali, I, pp. 285–286 and 319; S.F. Romano, 'Riformatori siciliani del Settecento (1770–1774)', *Società*, III (1947), pp. 328–352; G. Giarizzo, 'Nota introduttiva', in *Illuministi italiani*, VII, pp. 965–978; Garin, pp. 917, 994, and 1008.

On G.M. Ortes: Capone Braga, II/1, p. 5; Natali, I, pp. 259–261 and 312; F. Traniello, 'Una fonte veneta del pensiero politico-religioso di Rosmini: Gianmaria Ortes', in *Rosmini e il rosminianesimo nel Veneto* (Verona, 1970), pp. 113–127; Garin, III, p. 996. G. Torcellan, *Settecento veneto e altri scritti storici* (Turin, 1969), pp. 1–145; B. Anglani, 'L'apologista libertino. La religione "atea" di Gianmaria Ortes', in *Foi et raison dans l'Europe des Lumières*, ed. C. Prunier, vol. III (Montpellier, 2001), pp. 141–169; P. Farina, '«Investigare e spiegare l'apparente per il reale delle cose»: «Il metodo de' geometri» in Gianmaria Ortes', *Giornale critico della filosofia italiana*, XXII (2002), pp. 58–105.

On I. Rossi: ELR, 1788, xvii, pp. 409–411; JE, 1789, v, pp. 494–495; BUAM suppl., LXXIX, pp. 476–477; De Tiplado, III, pp. 338–339; Sommervogel, VII, cols 168–170.

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On A. Zorzi: C. Vannettii *Commentarius de vita Alexandri Georgii...* (Siena, 1779) (cf. GL, 1780, xxxviii, pp. 227–253); BUAM, LXV, p. 376; De Tiplado, III, pp. 383–385; Sommervogel, VIII, cols. 1519–1520; Capone Braga, II/1, p. 66; G. Gasperoni, 'L'abate Zorzi e l'iniziativa di una *Nuova Enciclopedia Italiana*', *Nuova Antologia*, LXXXVI (1951), vol. CDLII, pp. 288–305; Natali, I, pp. 218 and 232; E. Raimondi, 'Letteratura e scienza nella *Storia* del Tiraboschi', in *Scienza e letteratura nella cultura italiana del Settecento*, R. Cremante and W. Tega eds (Bologna, 1984), pp. 298–299.

On A. Montanari: G. Moschini, *Della letteratura veneziana del secolo XVIII fino a' nostri giorni* (Venice, 1806–1808), I, p. 128.

## 5.1 Cesare Baldinotti (1747–1821)

### *De recta humanae mentis institutione* ('*Historiae philosophicae prima, et expeditissima adumbratio*')

**5.1.1** Cesare Baldinotti was born in Florence on 12th July, 1747, and died in Padua on 22nd November, 1821. An Olivetan Benedictine Monk, he was abbot of the Florentine monastery of San Miniato al Monte. In 1774 he was appointed to teach logic and metaphysics at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Gymnasium in Mantua, where he stayed until 1783, when he took up a chair of the same name at Pavia University. In the academic year of 1796–1797, he was obliged to suspend his

teaching in Pavia after being accused under the new political régime of being an “aristocrat or worse”, as stated in a note in the reform plans of the University preserved in the State Archives in Milan. In 1802 the University of Padua appointed him librarian, and the following year he became professor of logic and “critical art”. In 1805, he added metaphysics to his teaching of logic. He held his last university course in 1808 as full professor of the “analysis of ideas”. In his final years, he was in contact with Rosmini and Tommaseo, students at Padua University, who thus became better acquainted with “that bizarre old Florentine in the same hard mould as Dante” (N. Tommaseo, *Antonio Rosmini*, ed. C. Curto (Domodossola and Milan, 1958), p. 69).

**5.1.2** Baldinotti only produced two works on philosophy. In Pavia, in 1787, he published, “apud Petrum Galeatium”, a work on logic, *De recta humanae mentis institutione libri IV*, the product of his university teaching. In this work, he tried “to combine logic and metaphysics, and to include an analysis of the intellectual faculties and operations, the origin and formation of the most abstract ideas, the elements of cognition, their extension, the sources and means from which they may be derived in order to extend their confines, the doctrine of certainty and probability, critical art, the philosophy of languages, and a brief compendium of the history of philosophy”, as he himself stated in a memorandum addressed to the council of Pavia University on 12th March, 1795. Following the most authoritative masters of sensationalism (above all Locke, but also Condillac and Francesco Soave, whose *Istituzioni filosofiche* he used for his university courses), he thus intended to examine the sources of human knowledge and to indicate the criteria by which we can use our cognitive faculties correctly. This avowed theoretical intention did not, however, prevent the author from prefacing the treatise with a ‘*Historiae philosophicae prima, et expeditissima adumbratio*’ (pp. XLIX–CXXIV), that is an “Initial, very rapid sketch of the history of philosophy”.

His other work, the *Tentaminum metaphysicorum libri tres*, of which in fact only the first book, the *Tentamen primum. De metaphysica generali* (Padua: Typis Seminarii, 1817) appeared, was written in his old age, when after finally retiring from university teaching, Baldinotti felt the need to re-establish the theoretical basis of the sensationalist doctrines, which he for the most part shared, albeit with some criticism in defence of Christian spiritual and metaphysical principles. However, the significance of this work lies above all in the ‘Appendix: De Kantii philosophandi ratione et placitis ut ad metaphysicam generalem referuntur’ (§§ 883–929, pp. 379–400), which, together with that of Francesco Soave (on whom see below, 5.2), constitutes one of the first approaches to Kantian thought in Italy. It can be follows: a brief introduction (§§ 883–887), a presentation of the Kantian problem (§§ 888–892), an account of Kant’s theory of consciousness and its consequences (§§ 893–911), and a critical evaluation (§§ 912–929). We can also mention Baldinotti’s *Dissertazione in cui spiegasi il piacere che si prova alle rappresentazioni tragiche*, which was written during his stay in Mantua and is an interesting testimony to the aesthetics of the age of the Enlightenment: the work was

unpublished during the author's lifetime, and has since been edited and published by M. Dal Pra in the *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia*, XXIX (1974), pp. 171–190; reproduced in M. Dal Pra, *Logica, esperienza e prassi* (Naples, 1976), pp. 177–199.

**5.1.3** Even for a sensationalist philosopher like Baldinotti, philosophy is still taken to mean “love or study of knowledge” (*De recta humanae mentis institutione*, ‘Proemium’, p. XXXV, § LXV). Going back to classic sources (Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero), he defines it as the “science of all things that can be investigated and understood with the divine gift of reason”; and it is a science “because it demonstrates everything of which it speaks and because it enquires not only into things but into the reasons for things”. A philosopher must comprehend the tasks of an investigative mind clearly, and this mind must first of all be free of error and guided by a “correct” method, that is to say, reason must search and experiment, free of all dogmas or authoritative principles; it must never transcend experience itself but be validated by experience, desisting when faced with whatever goes beyond experience and is destined to remain unknown to us, such as “true causes”, the “ends of things and their connections” or the “prime, inner essences of substances” (p. XXXVII, § LXVII). Yet a sensationalist, Christian philosopher does not restrict himself to an appeal to human weakness (*imbecillitas*); he also calls upon the *mens divina*, the “supreme knowledge of the creator”, to whom alone everything is admirably manifest (cf. p. XLI, §§ LXXI e LXXII). The history of philosophy is thus the history of human reason and its use throughout the centuries.

However, Baldinotti does not stop at a concept of the history of philosophy which is purely instrumental and preparatory. The conviction that this discipline has its own independent worth, by that time proven by many “distinguished, precise, and highly learned writers”, transpires from the ‘Proemium’ (p. XXXIV, § LXXIV). These writers have left us excellent works on the history of philosophy, so widespread as to be in everyone's hands and in which “the beginnings, progress, and destiny (*fata*) of philosophy”, as well as the “philosophers' schools, doctrines and systems”, are set out (p. XLVIII, § LXXXI). These “distinguished writers” are Laertius and Plutarch among the ancients, and among the moderns, Steuco, Vossius, Stanley, Brucker, Buonafede, and Formey; to which we can add Cudworth, Mosheim, Launoy, Morhof, Dutens, Montucla, Bailly, Savérien, and Targioni (p. CXXIV, note 14).

### **5.1.4 ‘Historiae philosophicae prima, et expeditissima adumbratio’**

**5.1.4.1** This outline of the history of philosophy is divided into 159 untitled paragraphs, comprises 75 pages, and follows the entire history of thought from its barbarian origins to the most recent developments (Wolff, Newton). The subject is dealt with thoroughly, even though it is distinguished from other similar works by its brevity. There are very few footnotes, only 14, which mainly serve as internal references: the last note is of particular interest since, as we have seen, it is here

that the author indicates his sources and refers to Fabricius' *Bibliotheca Graeca* and *Latina*. Some notes where Baldinotti considers the thoughts of some of his contemporaries (notes 5, 8, 10, 11, and 13), in particular the French encyclopaedists (note 4) are also of a certain importance. The 'Adumbratio' is not preceded by any preface, but it is mentioned in the general 'Proemium', where it states that it is necessary to know the history of philosophy before entering the "labyrinths" of logic (§§ LXIV, LXXIX, LXXX, and LXXXI, pp. XXXIV and XLVII–XLVIII).

**5.1.4.2** The periodization of ancient philosophy does not present anything new compared to other historiography inspired by Brucker: philosophy has always existed among all peoples; the "Barbarians" derived their philosophy in various ways from the descendants of Noah. In particular, in the various interweave of peoples and doctrines, the Egyptians were influenced by the Hebrew world, the Greeks by the Egyptians, and the Romans by the Greeks. Greek philosophy is divided into the two traditional periods: that of the poets and early sages, and that of the philosophical schools, all of which derived from Thales or Pythagoras. Roman philosophy is nothing but an extension of Greek philosophy but it is an important link in the transition from the ancient to the medieval age, which began with the end of the Western Roman Empire. For the Eastern world, which continued to gravitate around Constantinople, this was, on the other hand, a period of splendour, when ancient Platonism encountered Christianity.

The period from the sixth to the twelfth century constitutes the first period of the Middle Ages when there were two currents of thought, one influenced by religious heresy (Arianism and Pelagianism) and by philosophical vacuity, immersed as it was in vain disputation, the other, the depositary of *philosophia pura*. To the former belong Gottschalk of Orbais (the rebel theologian of the Carolingian age), Scotus Eriugena, Roscelin, Abelard, and Gilbert de la Porrée; to the second Cassiodorus, Dennis the Little, Isidore of Seville, the Venerable Bede, Alcuin, Rhabanus Maurus, Anselm, and Lanfranc. These were the "forerunners of true philosophy", indeed those who "opened the door to the restoration of philosophy" (pp. LXXXIX–XC, § LXXXIX). Then came Scholasticism, divided into three ages: the first, which partly overlaps with the previous period, lasts from the mid-eleventh to the mid-thirteenth century, and includes Roscelin, Anselm, Lanfranc, Peter Lombard, Alexander of Hales, and Peter Comestor; the second begins towards the mid-thirteenth century and ends in about 1330, the age that witnessed the secular coronation of Louis of Bavaria and the separation of imperial power from that of the Church. This is the age of the *magna nomina*, of the *acutissima ingenia* (p. XC, § XC), that is to say of Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Duns Scotus. There then follows the third period, which lasts until the modern restoration of philosophy and contains, among others, Durand of Saint-Pourçain, William of Ockham and Jean Buridan. The *magnus exercitus* of the Scholastics can be divided both by sects, or schools, of which there were numerous, lively groups, and by well-defined periods, those of the nominalists, formalists, realists, and also Albertists, Thomists, Scotists, and Ockhamists.

The modern restoration of philosophy has its roots in the medieval period itself, which can also be divided into three periods on the basis of strictly historical events: the first from Charlemagne to the Ottonian dynasty; the second from Gerbert of Aurillac (Pope Sylvester II) to the thirteenth century; and the third which begins under the patronage of the Italian Humanist princes and thanks to the work of Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly. The age of Humanism and the Renaissance, and above all the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, then witnessed the development and completion of this restoration of philosophy. Baldinotti's compendium offers no periodization or divisions of philosophy in the modern age either by schools or by 'nations': it seems that any drive towards 'restoration' and renewal, above all in the philosophy of nature, came about thanks to individuals rather than to philosophical currents or schools.

**5.1.4.3** One fundamental theory runs through the whole 'Adumbratio': philosophy is reborn, or is restored, when there is the "correct use" of human reason. This occurred particularly in the modern age when it was possible to elaborate not only a new philosophy of nature but also a new theory of knowledge. The theme of the resurgence, or restoration, of philosophy (which, as we have seen, was also 'reborn' in the Middle Ages, but in a different sense) hence becomes central to Baldinotti's treatment of the subject, almost a historiographical category on which his entire compendium pivots. This explains his partial reappraisal of medieval thought. With regard to Thomas Aquinas, the prince of the Scholastics, he appropriates Fontenelle's judgement: "He would have been another Descartes if their ages had met". On a par with Aquinas there are other Scholastic philosophers, such as Bonaventure and Giles of Rome, who are not to be considered "gloomy, quarrelsome, captious, puerile, and dedicated to futile questions". Picking up Leibniz's judgement, Baldinotti states that the "well-founded doctrine" of many Scholastics "had to be emended, not despised" (p. XCIII, § XCIV–XCV).

In broadening the cultural horizon, the Middle Ages included great men in every cultural field, from philosophy to *belles lettres*, from the sciences to the arts, such as Peter of Abano, Arnold of Villanova, Raymond Lull, Alfonso the Sage, Brunetto Latini, Guido Cavalcanti, Luca Pacioli, Paolo Toscanelli and also the "great triumvirs of philosophical freedom": Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. However, Baldinotti condemns the vain discussions, the peripatetic servility, the abuse of the principle of authority, the quarrelsome spirit, and the "Scholastic trivialities" of the Middle Ages (pp. XCIV–XCV, § XCIX), that is, their inability to draw man closer not only to nature but also to himself in order to attain a realistic understanding of his own cognitive faculties. In this spirit Baldinotti is even willing to condemn the philosophers, whether Platonists or Aristotelians, who came to Italy from Greece at the time of the Council of Florence and after the fall of Constantinople, bringing empty disputes rather than any true cultural renewal. He recalls of Theodorus Gaza, for example: "Just so that we do not deride only the Scholastics, he [Theodore Gaza] brought up a ridiculous question with Plethon about the difference between *agere* and *facere*" (p. XCVI, § CI). It is in the same critical vein that he opposes the theosophical doctrines inspired by Paracelsus and Böhme, whose chimeric questions are on a par with Scholastic futilities (*nugae*) (p. CIII, § CXXI).

This more balanced attitude towards the medieval period was also dictated by apologetic motives, which become apparent above all in the section devoted to modern philosophy. Baldinotti does not hesitate in denouncing the impiety, materialism, scepticism, and unbelief of many modern philosophers, in particular those who were inspired by Pierre Bayle, considered the “father and master” of modern Pyrrhonism and immoral conduct: “He is welcomed with open arms by certain tiny, plebeian philosophers, who are the disgrace and shame of our times, and who often raise their heads towards heaven whenever they say the name of Hobbes, Spinoza, Tindal, and Collins. They find refuge in them, seek help from them, taking and stealing everything” (p. CIV, § CXXIV). After mentioning Descartes, Malebranche, Hobbes, Diderot, the “dissolute” and “licentious” Berkeley, and Hume, Baldinotti’s criticisms are even extended to Locke, although the latter had treated all philosophical questions “in the most pregnant of manners” (p. CXIII, § CXXXIX). Hence, apart from a certain prolixity and some gaps in his analysis, method, and criticism, Locke is declared to be “not wholly healthy” as far as the doctrine of the spirituality, immortality, and freedom of the soul is concerned, for which he “was criticised by his own followers and quite validly confuted by Gerdil, the major metaphysician of our times” (p. CXIV, § CXLI).

These judgements on modern thought can be integrated with the appendix ‘De Kantii philosophandi ratione et placitis ut ad metaphysicam generalem referuntur’, contained, as we have said, in the first of the three planned *Tentamina metaphysicorum* (1817). Baldinotti points out that Kant posed the problem of the conditions of the possibility of human knowledge in a contradictory manner, arriving at a radical phenomenism which, for Baldinotti, is a synonym for subjectivism and scepticism (§ 913). Kant tried to make practical reason a substitute for the negations and doubts of theoretical reason (§§ 918–920), but in practice this conciliatory attempt was a failure, and in his system he maintained the most negative aspects of the diverse and contrasting philosophical systems of the past. Kant was not only sceptical but also dogmatic (more than the believers in innate ideas themselves), claiming that he had constructed a general theory of faculties and of their operations *a priori* (§§ 921–922). He was more of a rationalist than anyone who had gone before him, but also an empiricist, since he believed that no knowledge is possible without referring to sensible intuition (§§ 923–924). He was an idealist but also a materialist (§§ 925–926). In all these critical observations Baldinotti borrowed heavily from Degérando, whose historiographical opinion he heavily depends on (see Degérando<sup>1</sup>, II, pp. 167–244; III, pp. 505–551).

**5.1.4.4** As an introduction to a basic course on logic, Baldinotti’s ‘Adumbratio’ on the history of philosophy had to respect precise methods and aims, which required brevity and synthesis. Baldinotti himself had warned the reader about this at the end of his general ‘Proemium’. This is why this history of philosophy is complete but so succinct. Following the order of time, the information on the development of philosophy throughout the centuries is set out with scholastic precision and dryness. The treatment is not reduced, however, to a simple sequence of dates and bare facts at the university student’s disposal, to help him with the

difficulties of a basic course on logic; the account is always enriched with, albeit discreet, ethical and religious judgements in order to guide the student through the 'dangerous' maze of philosophical doctrines.

**5.1.5** The *Nuovo giornale enciclopédico* of the Venetian noblewoman Elisabetta Caminer greeted the *De recta humanae mentis institutione* as the work of "a man of genius", who knew how to dedicate himself with "discernment" to "elementary books", "within the grasp of young people who are to be initiated into science" (NGE, 1787, October, p. 7). An anonymous reviewer did not fail to notice the succinct 'Adumbratio', which is defined as "a well-painted picture of the history of philosophy" where the author demonstrates "a profound knowledge" and "a fine way of evaluating" (pp. 8–10). Even in the theoretical treatment that follows "the doctrines of the most famous philosophers are examined, and rectified, especially those of Locke and others, and this is done without arrogance or malice, but with true and neat philosophical freedom" (p. 12).

The *Efemeridi letterarie di Roma* also reviewed the *De recta humanae mentis institutione* favourably, praising the "picture small in size but of great design, and in very bright colours, that represents the history of philosophy, that is to say, its early origins, progress, events, calamities, and restorations in all nations and in all periods until our own". It is a history of philosophy, the review continues, that "more specifically concerns logic and metaphysics" but is always supported by "an unbiased and sure judgement of the authors who distinguished themselves in these two sciences after the resurgence of philosophy" (ELR, 1788, XVII, p. 44).

However the *Tentamina metaphysicorum* (1817), Baldinotti's other work, was presented in the Paduan *Giornale dell'italiana letteratura* as a work that was ill-suited to the taste of the "followers of the modern *idéologie*" because it was written in Latin and set out traditionally, although it did present "some novel, highly judicious criticisms and observations" on the philosophical systems examined (GIL, 1818, XLVII, pp. 48 and 51–52). This work on metaphysics, like that dedicated to logic, also includes a history of philosophy. As Baldinotti wrote in it, "ancient and modern opinions, and the authors who dealt thoroughly with such points, are cited", and it is "acceptable for a historian to provide some information about the thoughts of the men of great minds" who had dealt with these subjects. In this way, Baldinotti continues, "if not the history of philosophy, that of the human intellect is illustrated. At least this will be a kind of intellectual gymnastics which, by exercising the faculties of the mind, will make them quick, sharp, and wise, just as ancient gymnastics by exercising the body made it lithe, able, and sturdy". This caused the reviewer to comment ironically, "Thus writes our Professor", "whom we have no intention of contesting, provided that these gymnastics do not recall the Arabs' jousts and the Scholastics' tournaments" (pp. 70–71).

Yet more than these reviews, the person who promoted the reputation of Baldinotti more than anyone was Antonio Rosmini. Rosmini held the elderly professor of philosophy in high esteem and left us a portrait of him (dated 28th June, 1818) in his *Prove di alcuni caratteri d'uomini ch'io conosco*: "He possesses great judiciousness; he occupies himself more with understanding and explaining



the studies of others well than with discovering the new, and this is because he has a great consideration for the philosophers who came before him. [...] He does not have a particularly philosophical spirit himself, precisely because he is not an investigator and inventor, but he has great clarity of exposition", and a great capacity for synthesis. "He is very sensible when judging authors: it is just that he really praises the principal ones too much, and treats those who have some failings harshly, particularly those who are abstruse and too punctilious".<sup>1</sup>

Despite his sensationalist approach, Baldinotti's logical and metaphysical work was reprinted in Rome in 1856 by the Propaganda Fide typographers, and promptly reviewed in the *Civiltà cattolica*. This work, writes the reviewer, the Jesuit Matteo Liberatore, is "worthy of being better known" for its "clarity of expression", "order", and "lucidity of exposition". "The Author is very clear in his concepts", Liberatore continues, "and very free of the nebulosity that I know not what wind from the north is bringing to the bright, calm sky of Italy. Fully cognizant of the modern systems up to Kant, according to the order of subjects, he refers their thoughts, weighs up their reasons, and rejects their errors. Of a wholly orthodox soul, he does not founder against any of the rocks which are strewn through this sea of philosophical science, and with marvellous dexterity he manages to avoid the erroneous consequences that a stricter logic might have deduced from principles that he accepts in good faith from philosophers in vogue at his time". Certainly, Liberatore the neo-Thomist notes, he "does not seem to have read or at least meditated on the works" of the Scholastic authors; however, one has to share Baldinotti's criticism of "Kantian innovation", which "quite rightly seemed to him to be a perversion of science, and a precipice that leads one into all sorts of absurdities" (*Civiltà Cattolica*, Year VII, 3rd Series, vol. III, 1856, pp. 683–684).

**5.1.6** On Baldinotti's life and works: *Memorie e documenti per la storia dell'Università di Pavia e degli uomini più illustri che v'insegnarono* (Pavia, 1878), I, pp. 468 e 589; Ferrari, p. 66; DBI, V, pp. 490–492. On the cultural environment: M. Baldi, *David Hume nel Settecento italiano: filosofia ed economia* (Florence, 1983), pp. 109–139 ('Cesare Baldinotti e la cultura mantovana'). On his relationship with Antonio Rosmini, see *Vita di Antonio Rosmini scritta da un Sacerdote dell'Istituto della Carità*, riveduta ed aggiornata dal prof. G. Rossi (Rovereto, 1959), I, pp. 133–134.

Some reviews of the time: NGE, 1787, October, pp. 7–12; ELR, 1788, xvii, pp. 43–46 (review of *De recta humanae mentis institutione*); GIL, 1818, XLVII, pp. 48–71 (review of the *Tentamina metaphysica*); *La civiltà cattolica*, Year VII, 3rd Series, vol. III (1856), pp. 682–687 (review of both works).

<sup>1</sup>Cf. G. Radice, *Annali di Antonio Rosmini*, II: [1817–1822] (Milan, 1968), pp. 26–27. Here Radice also stresses the considerable influence that Baldinotti had on young Rosmini: "He convinced him of the importance of conscience as a principle of knowing, he suggested to him philosophical terms for his rational construction, he exercised him in logic and criticism and, above all, he confirmed to him the usefulness of sincere, clearly comprehensible discussion with the most thoughtful and diverse souls".

On the significance of Baldinotti's work: Romagnosi-Poli, p. 655; Cantù, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, p. 567; E. Troilo, 'Un maestro di Antonio Rosmini a Padova. Cesare Baldinotti', in Id., *Figure e dottrine di pensatori*, I (Naples, 1937), pp. 301–314; Capone Braga, II/1, pp. 83–85; II/2, pp. 198–207 ('La critica del Baldinotti [a Kant]'); Natali, I, pp. 177 and 221; Garin, III, pp. 979, 1011, 1071, 1104, 994–995, and 1409; Motzo Dentice d'Accadia, pp. 105–107; G.F. Frigo, 'Sensismo e antikantismo a Padova all'inizio del XIX secolo. Cesare Baldinotti', in *Medioevo e Rinascimento veneto con altri studi in onore di Lino Lazzarini*, II (Padua, 1979), pp. 349–366; Id., 'La prima diffusione del kantismo a Padova. Cesare Baldinotti e Jacopo Bonfadini studiosi di Kant', in *Kant e la finalità nella natura. A duecento anni dalla Critica del Giudizio* (Padua, 1990), pp. 215–248; M. Baldi, 'Cesare Baldinotti e gli orientamenti empiristici dell'Accademia di Mantova nella seconda metà del Settecento', in *Economia, istituzioni, cultura in Lombardia nell'età di Maria Teresa*, A. De Maddalena, E. Rotelli, and G. Barbarisi eds. (Bologna, 1982), vol. II, pp. 185–200; G. Berti, *Censura e circolazione delle idee nel Veneto della Restaurazione* (Venice, 1989), pp. 436–441; G. Piaia, *Le vie dell'innovazione filosofica nel Veneto moderno (1700–1866)* (Padua, 2011), pp. 209, 238, and 240.

## 5.2 Francesco Soave (1743–1806)

### ***Istituzioni di logica, metafisica ed etica* ('Compendio della storia della filosofia specialmente rispetto alla logica, alla metafisica, e all'etica')**

**5.2.1** A man of letters, philosopher, and publicist, Father Francesco Soave was one of the most important Italian representatives of empiricist thought. He was born in Lugano, in the Ticino canton, on 10th June, 1743, and died in Pavia on 17th January, 1806, having dedicated his entire life to cultural work and the organisation of schools in Lombardy then under the rule of Maria Theresa and Joseph of Austria. He was educated by the Somascan Fathers, an Order which he entered when he was still a young man. On completing the traditional course of studies (the humanities, rhetoric, philosophy, and theology), he chose to work as a teacher in the Order's schools. His gift for letters was soon noticed, and he was invited to teach in Parma, first at the College for Noblemen, then at the University. The environment in Parma, marked by Condillac's presence there, played a decisive role in Soave's cultural development. From literary studies he moved to the study of philosophy, becoming increasingly committed to the acceptance of Locke's philosophy, in a continual attempt to reduce the 'excesses' of empiricism and Condillac's sensationalism, and stimulated by religious aims. In 1772 he came to Milan, where for over 20 years from 1774 he held the chair, first of moral philosophy, then of logic and metaphysics, at the Brera Gymnasium. In Milan he was able to take part in the Enlightenment reform movement, being specifically interested in the reorganisation of schools.

As far as his political commitment is concerned, in the last period of his life he revealed an openly counter-revolutionary spirit and ended up collaborating with the provisional Austrian government installed in Milan from 1799 to 1800 after the first Cisalpine Republic. On the return of the French during the second Cisalpine Republic, he was marginalised, but not for long because, once the Jacobin elements had been removed from political life, there was an increasing need for moderating forces. Soave re-obtained important posts in the field of public education, besides rightful recognition of his work in the field of culture and education. He died while holding the chair of the “analysis of ideas” at the University of Pavia.

**5.2.2** Soave began his writing career with a verse translation of Virgil’s *Bucolica* and *Georgica* (Rome, 1765). The *Grammatica ragionata della lingua italiana* and an *Antologia latina* (both printed in Parma in 1771) are connected to his teaching at the University of Parma. His works of a philosophical nature were mainly written during the period when he taught at the Brera Gymnasium in Milan. He translated John Wynne’s compendium of Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, enriching it with various appendices (Milan, 1775), and Locke’s own *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* (Milan, 1776). The five volumes of the *Istituzioni di logica, metafisica ed etica*, preceded by a ‘Compendio della storia della filosofia specialmente rispetto alla logica, alla metafisica, e all’etica’ (Milan: Marelli, 1791–1792) are a mature synthesis of his philosophical ideas and the product of his school teaching. This work was highly successful and widely adopted in Italian schools, as is testified by the countless editions and reprints that were made until about the mid-nineteenth century. To appeal to the taste of the time, Soave collaborated on the publication of a *Scelta d’opuscoli interessanti tradotti da varie lingue* (1775), changing the title of the collection post-1778 into *Opuscoli scelti sulle scienze e sulle arti*, a work in which major scientific discoveries were explained to a wider public. In the wake of the fervour for pedagogical studies aroused by Rousseau, he dedicated himself to producing didactic and pedagogical works for young people and schools: here we can mention the successful *Novelle morali* (Milan, 1782) and the *Compendio del metodo delle scuole normali*. Against the republican spirit, in 1795 he wrote the *Vera idea della rivoluzione di Francia*, having been explicitly asked to do so by the Austrian government, which was in a state of bitter controversy. Of works written during the last period of his life, we can mention *La filosofia di Kant esposta ed esaminata* (Modena, 1803), one of the first attempts in Italy to approach Kant’s difficult thought, and the *Riflessioni sopra il progetto di Elementi d’Ideologia di Destutt-Tracy*, drawn up in 1804 and published posthumously in the *Memorie dell’Istituto Nazionale Italiano*, Classe di scienze morali, politiche, di letteratura, belle arti, I/1 (Bologna, 1809), pp. 117–160. See also the *Epistolario*, ed. S. Barelli (Locarno, 2006).

**5.2.3** As far as his ‘Compendio’ on the history of philosophy is concerned, Soave states in the preface to the *Istituzioni* that he “thought it necessary to give a brief notion of what has so far been written and imagined about logic, metaphysics and ethics so that young people, who are only now starting to apply themselves to philosophy, should not enter this new, unknown realm completely ignorant of its

history. There is all the more reason for this because the history of these three parts [of philosophy] covers the history of ancient philosophy almost entirely, since they were practically the only ones cultivated by ancient philosophers". By 'philosophy' Soave means the Pythagorean "love of knowledge", and by 'knowledge' he uses Cicero's definition as the "science of divine and human things, and of the causes from which they derive". In ancient times, Soave explains in greater detail, physics and mathematics, that is "the sciences that concern the knowledge of bodies", were cultivated in addition to logic, metaphysics, and ethics ("which also embraces politics and natural and civil rights") (1791 edition, I, pp. IX–X).

## 5.2.4 'Compendio della storia della filosofia'

**5.2.4.1** The 'Compendio della storia della filosofia specialmente rispetto alla logica, alla metafisica, e all'etica' constitutes the introductory section to Soave's philosophical *Istituzioni* (1791 ed., I, pp. IX–XLVIII). It is not very long, consisting of around 40 pages, yet it covers the entire history of philosophy from its barbarian origins to the age of the Enlightenment. Its original structure has survived despite the amendments made from one edition to another: ten manageable chapters, subdivided into articles in the part that concerns antiquity, that is to say, Barbarian, Greek, and Italic thought. There are no erudite footnotes, but we find sporadic bibliographical references in brackets, mainly indicating classical sources. A brief note at the end of the 'Compendio' refers readers to the most current ancient and modern works on the history of philosophy.

**5.2.4.2** In separating the periods of ancient philosophy, Soave follows the traditional outline: the "philosophy of the oldest nations" begins with the Chaldeans, the "first to cultivate sciences" (p. X). They are followed by the Persians, Arabs, Egyptians, Hebrews, Phoenicians, Indians, Chinese, Ethiopians, Mauritanians, Thracians, Scythians, and Celts. The "first to civilize the Greek peoples who were initially completely barbarian" were the Egyptian and Phoenician colonies (p. XV). This is how Greek philosophy originated, divided into the Ionic and Italic schools. The Italic school comprised the Etruscans (a people more ancient than the Greeks) and the Latins, who started to philosophize only "when they began to have contact with the Greeks" (p. XXXII). The eclectics of Potamon's school and the "younger Platonists", that is the Neoplatonists (who developed from the eclectics), brought ancient philosophy to a close. The first period of medieval philosophy is marked by the "Moors" and the translation of Aristotle into Arabic, but it is principally comprised of the philosophy of the Scholastics, whose early origins can be traced back to the Carolingian schools. Perhaps following Tiraboschi's model, Soave does not divide the Middle Ages into periods, and his account proceeds by centuries, including the main representatives and the cultural characteristics of each century, and dismissing radical contrasts between the schools of philosophy. The Middle Ages are followed by the "resurgence of philosophy", which started towards the

mid-fifteenth century with the arrival of the Greeks in Italy, and lasted until Soave's own time. These constitute three epochs that correspond to the three following centuries: the sixteenth century, characterised by the revival of the other ancient philosophies, above all Platonic, the seventeenth, deeply marked by Cartesianism, and the eighteenth, that of Locke, with its philosophical renewal to match the renewal of the sciences, particularly physics, that had already taken place.

**5.2.4.3** Soave's views on the history of philosophy were inspired by the doctrines that had been codified by the Enlightenment: Locke's empiricism and Condillac's sensationalism. The historiographical framework remains unchanged as far as the ancient world is concerned. Even in this brief presentation, there are still discussions of how ancient the various peoples were, of the importance of the Hebrew people for the development of theology rather than for philosophy, and of the transmission of knowledge from the East to the Greeks. Out of the many and various positions held by the Greek, Ionic, and Italic philosophers Soave decidedly prefers Potamon's eclectics. Potamon introduced "a new way of philosophizing, which is the only true and legitimate one" (p. XXXIII), to which the early Christians and the Fathers of the Church also adhered. Soave's agreement with eclecticism undoubtedly reflects the spirit of the Enlightenment. Yet where the Enlightenment left its deepest mark on this man of the Church is in his way of conceiving the Middle Ages, which he saw as a period of barbarity and obscurantism. In the century of Albert the Great, Aquinas, Bonaventura, and Scotus, philosophy, including physics, consisted purely of "subtleties" and "quibbling". "All study was aimed at determining which interpretation should be given to Aristotle's sentences, without bothering to examine whether these sentences [...] conformed to reason, truth, and nature. The art of analysis was almost unknown, and good philosophy could make no progress for several centuries, although it was not rare for very sharp and perspicacious minds to emerge" (p. XXXVI).

This condemnation of Scholastic philosophy also serves to highlight the "resurgence of philosophy" from the sixteenth century. It was, however, necessary to wait for the advent of Locke to be able to speak of a full philosophical renewal. For Soave, Locke is the true founder of modern philosophy, not Bacon, Gassendi or Descartes, even though they contributed "to shaking off the yoke of authority and prejudices that great minds had suffered under for many centuries, to making them accustomed to using their own reason, to doubting everything that was not evident [...]". It was Locke who destroyed "the vain Cartesian dreams" in logic and metaphysics, "substituting vain imaginings with analytical research and accurate reflection" (p. XL). At the beginning of his treatment of metaphysics, Soave repeats this assertion: "The first to reconcile truly wise and discerning men with metaphysics was Locke, demonstrating how it may, when used cautiously, introduce man to the most important knowledge, which is knowledge of oneself [...]" (1819 Naples ed., p. 6).

Other modern philosophers are the subject of Soave's criticism or praise. The theories of Campanella and Bruno are accused of "excessive impiety". The Cartesian criterion of truth seems to be "deceptive" and "not sufficiently sure" to Soave,

who does not even wish to mention the numerous other errors this philosopher made, particularly concerning the human soul. Spinoza's pantheism is "absurd", Leibniz's system "ingenious rather than sound", and Wolff's philosophy "boring" and "prolix" since he "frequently managed to make even the clearest things obscure" (1791 ed., p. XLIII). Condillac's theory that "all faculties are reduced to sensations, and are nothing but simple modifications of sensation" may appear questionable, "but in any case no-one before him possessed a better analytical spirit, no-one promoted it more both by example and by advice; no-one demonstrated better the vanity and peril of abstract systems" (p. XLV). D'Alembert's works, particularly his *Discours préliminaire* to the *Encyclopédie*, contain "excellent reflections" of a logical and metaphysical nature; Louis-Jean Lévêque de Pouilly's *Théorie des sentiments agréables* is full of "metaphysical juice"; Helvétius and Hume are "very acute metaphysicians"; Rousseau is "of a highly subtle mind" if one ignores his "extravagances". However, despite praising the theorists of sensationalism and, above all, the French *philosophes*, Soave does not forget the "very profound metaphysician" Giambattista Vico, whose only mistake was not to have combined his depth of thought with "greater clarity" (p. XLVI).

Locke's empiricism also ends up strongly conditioning the work *La filosofia di Kant esposta ed esaminata* (Modena, 1803), with which we can complete the picture of modern thought that Soave offers. His interest in Kant is stimulated by his educational concerns: now that Kant was becoming increasingly well-known thanks to Villers' essay (*Philosophie de Kant, ou principes fondamentaux de la philosophie transcendente*, Metz, 1801), it was best to put young people on their guard against the dangers contained in his thought, which "tends to destroy all the ideas and the soundest principles in both practical and speculative sciences", to such an extent that these doctrines have been "prohibited by some governments, [and] badly received by all" ('Introduzione', pp. 5–8). The treatment, clear as ever, is divided into the "theory of pure sensibility" (pp. 13–21), the "theory of pure intellect" (pp. 22–30), the "theory of pure reason" (pp. 31–37), and "practical philosophy" (pp. 38–52); following Villers' example, the doctrine of judgement is omitted. In an ironic tone, Soave reduces Kant's transcendentalism to innateness: "Sensation is I know not what, which comes from I know not where, and enters me I know not how; but as soon as it has entered me, I dress it I know not how and in I know not which form existing in me prior to it in I know not which manner, and which I call space. Then, thus attired, I transport it outside myself by I know not which force, and from this, I know not in which wise, I make the representation be born of I know not what, which I call external object" (p. 63). Kant's practical philosophy is also criticised. When speaking of moral law, Soave objects that "unfortunately the facts demonstrate" that the voice of the conscience "is hearkened by few", and therefore the categorical imperative is illusory (pp. 81–82). For Soave, pure practical reason, which is the legislator of itself, means nothing more than the will: "farewell to love of the family, love of the mother country, love of one's own perfection; farewell to obedience or concern for any human or divine legislation. My legislation depends solely on myself; and whether to follow it or not to follow it depends solely on my own free will" (pp. 83–84).

**5.2.4.4** Placed at the beginning of a basic course on philosophy, Soave's short but thorough history of philosophy is essentially a preparation for further study. This design obliged him to simplify the historiographical picture in all its eras as much as possible: indeed Soave systematically presents each thinker's biographical profile, mentions only his major works, and presents the most typical doctrines concisely. The different philosophers finally constitute *exempla* for those who are to be instructed both intellectually and morally. Copious additional notes and a precise indication of the sources are of no use in a work written for scholastic, educational purposes. Only at the end, in a brief note, does Soave invite anyone who "should like to have more extensive knowledge [...] of philosophical history" to consult Plutarch (that is the Plutarch of the *Placita philosophorum*), Diogenes Laertius and, of the moderns, Steuco, Vossius, Stanley, Brucker, Deslandes, Buonafede, and Formey (p. XLVIII).

**5.2.5** When reviewing Soave's *Istituzioni*, the *Nuovo Giornale Enciclopedico d'Italia* also considered the 'Compendio della storia della filosofia', pointing out how it served as an "excellent introduction" to the entire course on philosophy (NGEI, 1791, September, pp. 12–13). Indeed the success of the 'Compendio' is strictly linked to the diffusion of the *Istituzioni*, which were continually reprinted in the first half of the nineteenth century in many Italian cities: cf. *Bibliografia filosofica italiana 1800–1850* (Rome, 1982), pp. 242–245. Almost unique of its kind, until the *Elementi di filosofia* by Pasquale Galluppi (1820–1827), those by Salvatore Mancino (1835–1836), and the *Elementi di filosofia teoretica e morale* (1837) by the eclectic Baldassare Poli appeared, Soave's *Istituzioni* were for many decades the one and only school textbook. However, how this work was received did not only depend on the schools: it was strictly linked to the great success of Condillac's sensationalism, which was dominant in Italy, where Kant's philosophy had aroused much criticism, until Cousin's eclecticism and the ideas of Gioberti and Rosmini were affirmed.

It was in fact Rosmini who passed a very negative verdict on Soave's philosophical position: "In the Kingdom of Lombardy and Veneto", he wrote around 1829, "Soave, with the purest of aims, caused great damage by disseminating Condillacism everywhere and reducing philosophy to a compassionate mildness which, in luring common people with its apparent simplicity, generates the presumption and vain belief of being a philosopher in people who cannot and will never be so, and gives rise to a disdain for the great questions superior to their loquacious and sententious mediocrity" (*Nuovo saggio sull'origine delle idee*, ed. F. Orestano, I, Rome, 1934, p. 98). Similarly harsh judgements were made by the Kantian Alfonso Testa and by the "ideologists" (in particular by Giuseppe Compagnoni, the Italian translator of Destutt de Tracy), who all agreed in considering Soave's philosophical work "speculatively timid" (cf. Garin, p. 1037). Moreover, the essay on Kant's philosophy was judged to be a "confutation of Kant", and "very shallow, unworthy of Soave" as Vincenzo Cuoco wrote, even though he recognised "much clarity and precision" in the *Istituzioni* (V. Cuoco, *Scritti pedagogici inediti o rari*, ed. G. Gentile, Rome and Milan, 1909, pp. 45–47). Against these criticisms we can quote

the opinion of Alessandro Manzoni (“a disciple [of Locke] [...] certainly not the most obscure, and moreover a judicious man, besides being good”), while Foscolo described him as “a patient mind, with an easy-flowing pen and his head on his shoulders”: A. Manzoni, *Opere inedite o rare* (Milan, 1898), V, p. 82; U. Foscolo, *Opere*, (Florence, 1933), VII, p. 203.

In the field of the historiography of philosophy, we can quote the opinion of Dégérando: “Soave made a great effort to separate true philosophy from false and to reveal the causes of the deviations produced by the latter and the ruinous consequences it leads to” (Dégérando<sup>2</sup>, IV, p. 181). With this aim in mind, continues Dégérando, Soave drew inspiration both from Locke, and, above all, from the French philosophers (Condillac, Bonnet, D’Alembert). Dégérando expresses some reservations about Soave’s “talent” and “depth of thought”; but he recognizes that “in adopting the new philosophy of the French school”, Soave “was very careful not to confuse it with the systems of materialism, absolute scepticism, or utilitaristic morals that had been produced in France towards the end of the last century” (pp. 183–184).

**5.2.6** On Soave’s life and works: BUAM, LIII, pp. 441–443; *Notizie intorno la vita e gli studi del P. Soave C.R.S.* [obituary], GIL, 1805, XI, pp. 181–187; P. Pozzetti, *Della vita letteraria di Francesco Soave*, GPL, 1806, v, pp. 194–214; L. Catenazzi, *Elogio di Francesco Soave* [...] *Orazione* (Como, 1812) (reviewed in GIL, 1813, XXXV, pp. 191–192); De Tiplido, I, pp. 430–436; L. Fontana, *Francesco Soave (1743–1806)* (Pavia, 1907); Ferrari, p. 632.

On the significance of his work: Lombardi, I, pp. 266–270; Romagnosi-Poli, pp. 655–656 and 661–664; Cantù, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, pp. 566–567; A. Avanzini, *Francesco Soave e la sua scuola* (Turin, 1881); V. Lozito, ‘Francesco Soave e il sensismo’, *Rivista rosmianiana*, VI (1911–1912), pp. 70–81, 130–163, 216–230, 315–332, 422–433; VII (1912–1913), pp. 88–96, 134–157, 226–233, 298–319; VIII (1913–1914), pp. 153–171; G. Natali, *Idee costumi uomini del Settecento. Studi e saggi letterari* (Turin, 1926<sup>2</sup>), pp. 417–425; Capone Braga, II/1, pp. 124–159; II/2, pp. 190–198; Natali, I, pp. 178–179 and p. 221; M.F. Sciacca, *Il pensiero italiano nell’età del Risorgimento* (Milan, 1963<sup>2</sup>), pp. 124–130; F. Zambelloni, *Le origini del kantismo in Italia* (Milan, 1971), pp. 69–78; Garin, III, pp. 1037–1041, 1061, and 1412; C. Rossi Ichino, ‘Francesco Soave e le prime scuole elementari tra il ’700 e l’800’, in *Problemi scolastici ed educativi nella Lombardia del primo Ottocento* (Milan, 1977), I, pp. 93–185; A.M. Bernardinis, *La letteratura didascalica di padre Soave fra retorica e pedagogia*, in *Pedagogia fra tradizione e innovazione. Studi in onore di Aldo Agazzi* (Milan, 1978), pp. 339–360; F. Tancini, *Novellieri settentrionali tra sensismo e romanticismo: Soave, Carter, Carcano* (Modena, 1993); S.C. Sgroi, *Studi di storia della terminologia linguistica: la Grammatica ragionata della lingua italiana, 1771, di Francesco Soave tra razionalismo ed empirismo* (Rome, 2002); *Francesco Soave e la grammatica del Settecento*, C. Marazzini and S. Fornara eds. (Alessandria, 2004).

Reviews of his philosophical works: NGEI, 1791, September, pp. 12–20 (*Istituzioni di logica*); November, pp. 14–18 (*Istituzioni di metafisica*); 1792, September,



pp. 3–9 (*Istituzioni di etica o filosofia morale*); GE, 1775, IX, pp. 65–69, 113–118; X, pp. 65–71; XI, pp. 39–45; 1776, V, pp. 57–61, 71–72, 113–117; ELR, 1776, V, pp. 30–31, 172–173; MT, 1776, II, pp. 26–29; IV, pp. 21–24; (*Saggio filosofico di Gio. Locke sull'intelletto umano*); GE, 1777, V, pp. 3–11; VI, pp. 3–10; VIII, pp. 49–52; X, pp. 33–40 (J. Locke, *Guida dell'intelletto nella ricerca della Verità*); MEB, 1782, pp. 255–256 and 1784, pp. 218–219 (*Novelle morali*).

### 5.3 Lodovico Gemelli (1757–1833)

#### *Elementi di storia filosofica*

**5.3.1** Lodovico Gemelli was born in Olivadi (Catanzaro) on 18th January, 1757. He was educated at the Capuchin convent school in Catanzaro and entered the order at a very early age. He was a pupil of the philosopher and mathematician Gregorio Aracri, a fellow Capuchin, who introduced him to the study of modern philosophy, particularly of the French Enlightenment. In 1784, after the Capuchins had been exiled from Calabria, Gemelli moved to the conventual province of Naples. He spent many years teaching philosophy in the seminary of Castellamare di Stabia, where he wrote and had his major works printed. On the return of the monks to Calabria, Gemelli gradually rose to the top of the Capuchin order: reader in philosophy in 1802, definitor of the provincial minister in 1805, and finally provincial minister of the Calabrian province in 1808. Engaged in the restoration of religious observance in the convents under his jurisdiction, he had to face several difficulties caused by the Napoleonic occupation of Calabria and the increasingly common practice of banditry. He died in Nicastro (Catanzaro) on 5th January, 1833.

**5.3.2** A man of great culture and vast knowledge, member of the Florimontana Academy under the name of Filino Alicasto, a book-lover, particularly versed in the teaching of moral philosophy and the history of philosophy, Gemelli first published the *Elementi di geografia pe' giovanetti* (Naples, 1785), followed by the *Elementi di storia filosofica o sia Dell'origine, e progresso della filosofia; delle sette, e sistemi di tutti i filosofi. Cominciando da Adamo sino a' nostri tempi*, which appeared in Castellamare di Stabia (Naples) in 1793. His *Saggi di filosofia morale diretti alla gioventù* (Naples, 1801, vol. I) are also worthy of note; here he speaks of virtues and vices inviting “young scholars” to “avoid [...] all those old libertines who [...] are happy to infuse their perverse feelings in young people, simply for the pleasure of perpetuating their licentiousness” (pp. 218 and 220). The work invites readers to “reason like the splendid philosophers”, in order to reach the state of a virtuous life in which man finds his own happiness without desiring anything else (p. 173). The second volume of the *Saggi di filosofia morale* and various other philosophical and theological dissertations remained unpublished.

**5.3.3** The history of philosophy, Gemelli writes in the preface to his *Storia filosofica*, enquires into the “origins, progress, loss, and restoration of knowledge useful to humanity”. It comprises not only “theoretical” but also “practical”

philosophy, and is concerned with both the “knowledge useful to the spirit” and that “useful to the body, and to the whole of man’s well-being” (pp. IX–X). Philosophy is defined as the “study of correct reason” and the “knowledge of all things through their causes, which man may reach with the light of reason” (p. 1). Agreeing with Pythagoras, Gemelli states that the philosopher is a “friend or lover of learning”. Of the three parts into which philosophy is traditionally divided – intellectual, natural or physical, and moral – the most important is moral philosophy because this “deals [...] with how to lead a virtuous and happy life” (p. 2). The main sources of “philosophical history” are first of all the books of the great philosophers, especially those of Antiquity. In order to understand the teachings that philosophers have left us, it is necessary firstly to know “the time in which they lived”, secondly, “the School of which they were founders or members”, thirdly, “the general system of their opinions on the main objects of human knowledge”, and then many other things that belong to what we might call today the historical environment, that is to say “the country in which they lived, and the government and religion dominating there”, and so forth. (p. XI).

### 5.3.4 *Elementi di storia filosofica*

**5.3.4.1** The *Elementi* begin with a dedication to Abbot Gregorio Aracri, and a preface in which Gemelli outlines the methodology followed and the aims of his work. He is writing for the “benefit of young boys” (p. XII), that is, for schools, where the history of philosophy must be handled by “wise masters” because it is more important than political and civil history, which is the “history of men’s crimes”. The treatment opens with an introduction where Gemelli presents the sections of his work and his concept of philosophy, and it is structured into three parts: the first is devoted to ancient philosophy (which for him is “barbarian”), the second to Greek philosophy, and the third to “middle” and “new philosophy”. There is an evident imbalance in the text: most space is dedicated to Greek philosophy with a total of 68 pages; 40 pages are reserved for barbarian philosophy, and only 31 for medieval and modern philosophy. The three parts are then divided into chapters: ten on the various peoples of barbarian antiquity, 13 on the Greek philosophical sects, and only one on medieval and one on modern philosophy. The individual chapters are subdivided in turn into easy, numbered paragraphs, which help pupils to memorize them.

**5.3.4.2** The true founder of philosophy was he who first reflected on himself and the universe that surrounded him. Who was the first philosopher, therefore, if not Adam? We must remember that this is the beginning of human philosophy even if we cannot make the periodization of the history of philosophy start with Adam because the original knowledge of this “proto-parent” was soon lost in Antiquity. The first period that can be recorded is that of “barbarian” philosophy, as it existed among the Asian peoples (the Chaldeans, Persians, Arabs, Phoenicians, Indians, and

Chinese), Africans (Egyptians) and Europeans (Scythians, Thracians, and Celts). The link between barbarian philosophy and Greek speculation was created by the Egyptians and the Phoenicians, Gemelli states, basing himself on Clement of Alexandria (p. 47). The second period of philosophical history, therefore, embraces *grecanica* philosophy. This is principally a history of philosophical schools (there are 15 major ones, with a paragraph for each). The “poetic sect” of those men of knowledge who “with the aid of poetry” handed down the culture of ancient times, lies at the root of them (p. 51). Following Laertius and Buddeus, after this “poetic sect” came the Ionic (the philosophers of Miletus and Ephesus) and the Socratic sect, which was a “great development” of the Ionic and the source of the sects of the Cyrenaics, the Theodorean, the Eleans, the Megarians, the Platonists, the Peripatetics, the Cynics, the Stoics, and the Sceptics, or Pyrrhonists; then came the Italic, Eleatic, Epicurean, and Eclectic sects.

*Grecanica* philosophy disseminated beyond the borders of Greece, particularly among the Romans, “who were followers of many Greek sects”, until the Emperor, Antoninus Pius ordered that “only four sects should be tolerated: the Platonic, Stoic, Epicurean, and Peripatetic”. After the fall of the Roman Empire, philosophical studies were not forgotten, “because the Arabs [...] began to cultivate the study of letters, and some of the books of the Greeks that they translated into the Arabic language were those by Aristotle. Therefore, since all our schools began to follow this philosopher, he soon became the king of the school” (pp. 117–118). This is how the “middle” period began, in which we can distinguish three ages, headed respectively by Peter Lombard, Albert the Great, and William of Ockham. Some sixteenth-century philosophers, such as Pietro Pomponazzi and Agostino Nifo, can also be included in the “middle” period of philosophy.

Modern philosophy originated primarily as a reaction to “middle” philosophy and as a restoration of the ancient sects: Bessarion, Ficino, and Giovanni Pico revived the Platonic sect; Reuchlin and Hobbes the Pythagorean; and Justus Lipsius the Stoic. Some, such as Piccolomini, Zabarella, and Cremonini, “chose Aristotle as their leader”, while others (Patrizi and Telesio) continued the fierce battle against the Stagirite, which had been started by the first Humanists. Apart from the restoration of the philosophies of the ancients, the modern age produced masters who were able to introduce radical innovations, above all Bacon, “the father of experimental philosophy” (p. 129), Descartes, and the astronomers Galileo, Copernicus, and Tycho Brahe, followed by de Groot and Pufendorf, Locke, Spinoza, Malebranche, Newton, Leibniz, Bayle and finally, to conclude the review of philosophers in the modern age, Christian Wolff.

**5.3.4.3** Gemelli, therefore, goes back to the theory that men have philosophized since the beginning of time: besides possessing the innate capacity to reflect upon himself and upon the world, Adam also received particular illumination from God. However, what Flavius Josephus related about ancient patriarchal knowledge being inscribed on two pillars, one of brick and the other of stone, so that it would not be lost, is a myth, to be recorded “in the museum of credulities”. In reality, “all that was handed down concerning the nature of things by the first man to posterity was lost,

deformed, and corrupted". It is thus necessary to seek a new origin for philosophy properly speaking: it came not from Adam but "from the innate covetousness of human nature, or from a curiosity to find the truth, and also from man's need to use things to improve his poor life". There was, therefore, no people, Hebrew, Greek, or Barbarian, that had the privilege of being the first to hand down knowledge to other peoples because "we must believe that in all the regions of the earth there have always been men with great minds, who by contemplating the nature of things thus gave rise to the science of philosophy" (pp. 8–10). As far as the Greeks in particular are concerned, despite their contact with the Egyptians and Phoenicians, one can only think that what they elaborated regarding philosophy had its "origin, progress, and end" in them alone (p. 49).

Gemelli's verdict on the Middle Ages is influenced by the Enlightenment: Scholastic philosophy was nothing but the combination of philosophy and theology, as a result of which both suffered. He particularly condemns late Scholasticism, concerned with the great subtleties of "frivolous questions" and "pure formalities". Today, "Scholastic theology has fallen into the profoundest contempt"; its teachings barely survive and only in very few universities. Moreover, it is thanks to this empty way of philosophizing, which succeeds only in "complicating matters" rather than "clarifying them", that so many heresies and so many errors have arisen in Christ's Church (p. 122).

Gemelli's total lack of appreciation for medieval philosophy does not, however, prevent him from devoting some pages to this "middle" age. This is not the case for philosophy in Roman times and the Renaissance, though, since Gemelli considers it merely as an appendix to the previous Greek and medieval philosophy. Modern philosophy, on the other hand, which was initiated by "those great men who, disliking Scholastic barbarities" (p. 24), turned to the revival of ancient thought, is highly praised. Descartes remains the most important "restorer" of modern philosophy. However, just as Descartes overtook the Aristotelians, so today Newton has overtaken the Cartesians, and tomorrow, "in the way of the world" (p. 134), others will surpass Newton's followers.

**5.3.4.4** With his "poor, humble little book" (p. XIII) Gemelli intended to produce a simple, clear work for schools. The work is not banal, however: the *Elementi di storia filosofica* always lead the reader back to ancient and modern historiographical sources, permitting further enquiry. Yet Gemelli refers above all to the historiography of the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth century (Vossius, Fabricius, Sturm, Bayle, Brucker, and mainly Buddeus), while there is no trace of the historiography written in the second half of the eighteenth century, either in or outside Italy. In particular, it is surprising not to find any mention of Appiano Buonafede, a fellow man of the Church. Compared to Buonafede, Gemelli seems more detached and 'Enlightened': he is not afraid, for example, to agree with the Protestant Brucker's harsh criticism of the Middle Ages.

**5.3.5** The *Elementi di storia filosofica* made no impression on contemporary cultural circles. This history of philosophy was conditioned not only by its didactic aim but also, perhaps, by the convent environment in which it was written, even

though it was open to the great works of German historiography of philosophy. Gemelli is remembered as a follower of Condillac and the French philosophers, as well as the author of a history of philosophy and the *Saggi di filosofia morale*. He is, in short, an embodiment of that minor Enlightenment (for schools) which had pervaded all Italian cultural circles, including ecclesiastical ones.

**5.3.6** On Gemelli's life and works: BUAM Suppl., LXV, pp. 195–196; De Tipaldo, I, pp. 325–327; V. Capialdi, *Biografia [...] di Fr. Lodovico Gemelli cappuccino*, in Id., *Opuscoli varii*, I (Naples, 1840), pp. 4–7 (repeats the article published in De Tipaldo); Francesco da Vicenza, *Gli scrittori cappuccini calabresi* (Catanzaro, 1914), pp. 93–94; Ferrari, p. 342; *Bibliographia Franciscana*, XI: *Annis 1954–1957* (Rome, 1963), pp. 643–644, no. 2423.

On the significance of his work: Capone Braga, II, p. 103; M. Dal Pra, *Condillac* (Milan, 1942), pp. 371–372 (Gemelli is recalled as a “disseminator of Condillac's thought in Italy”); Garin, p. 996; Schneider, p. 203. A review of the *Elementi di geografia* (a modest testimony to Gemelli's presence in his contemporary cultural world) in GEN, 1785, August, pp. 110–112.

## 5.4 Giacinto Sigismondo Gerdil (1718–1802)

### *Histoire des sectes des philosophes/Istoria delle scuole dei filosofi*

**5.4.1** Cardinal Giacinto Sigismondo Gerdil (to the world, Jean-François) was born in Samoëns, Savoy, on 23rd June, 1718, and died in Rome on 12th August, 1802. He dedicated his long life to serving Catholic traditionalism, with the aim of limiting the ‘pernicious’ effects of the Enlightenment spirit and the French Revolution. He was very young, only 16, when he became a member of the Clerics Regular of Saint Paul or the Barnabites, with whom he completed his education in Bologna (in the philosophical and scientific subjects he was a pupil of Francesco Maria Zanotti and Eustachio and Gabriele Manfredi). After a period teaching at the Order's schools and colleges, he became professor of natural ethics and then moral theology at the University of Turin. In 1764 he was appointed ‘court preceptor’ of Charles Emmanuel (1751–1819), son of Prince Victor Amadeus, heir to the throne. In 1776, Pius VI raised him to the rank of cardinal, assigning him tasks in the Curia and in the central organisation of the Church. So began Gerdil's long sojourn in Rome, where he was employed in ecclesiastical ministries but also dedicated to theological studies, in a passionate apology of the Catholic Church and its doctrine. In 1798, when Rome was occupied by the French, Cardinal Gerdil moved to Turin. In March, 1800, he participated in the Venice conclave where Pius VII was elected pope, and then followed the pope to Rome, resuming his work in the Curia, despite his age, and at the same time continuing his philosophical and theological studies.

**5.4.2** The work for which Cardinal Gerdil is remembered here is a short general history of philosophy, written in French, for his noble pupil, Prince Charles Emanuel. The *Histoire des sectes des philosophes* was perhaps originally part of

a group of *Esercitazioni storiche* that the Barnabite philosopher and theologian prepared for the Prince of Piedmont between 1764 and 1776. Along with other written papers it was not published until 1806, when it appeared in volume 1 of the Roman edition of Gerdil's works (1806–1821, I, pp. 225–282). In 1828 a Latin translation was printed in Florence, and later in 1830, in Milan, an Italian translation, which was then republished in the Neapolitan edition of his *Opera omnia* (1853–1856, II, pp. 464–486). We refer to this Neapolitan edition here.

The *Introduzione allo studio della religione* (Turin, 1755), an extensive apology of religion working its way through the history of philosophy from Thales to contemporary times, would undoubtedly have been a more original and serious work if it had been finished. However, the planned work stops at the first part, the *Esame delle opinioni degli antichi filosofi sull'esistenza e provvidenza di Dio, e sulla spiritualità ed immortalità delle anime umane*, I: *Della setta ionica*; II: *Della setta italica*.

Gerdil's anti-Enlightenment attitude is revealed in *Anti-Émile ou Réflexions sur la théorie et la pratique de l'éducation, contre les principes de Mr. Rousseau* (Turin, 1763), which was translated into various European languages. In his criticism of the Enlightenment, Cardinal Gerdil used Malebranche's metaphysics in particular and was obviously influenced by Plato and Augustine. In this connection, it is worth noting his first two works: *L'immatérialité de l'âme démontrée contre Mr. Locke par les mêmes principes par lesquels ce philosophe démontre l'existence et l'immatérialité de Dieu; avec des nouvelles preuves de l'immatérialité de Dieu et de l'âme, tirées de l'Écriture, des Pères, et de la raison* (Turin, 1747), and the *Défense du sentiment du père Malebranche sur la nature, et l'origine des idées, contre l'examen de Mr. Locke* (Turin, 1748).

Of Gerdil's numerous other philosophical works, we can mention here the less polemical *Dissertazione dell'esistenza di Dio e dell'immaterialità delle nature intelligenti* (Turin, 1755), the *Récueil de Dissertations sur quelques principes de philosophie et de religion* (Paris, 1760), *Della origine del senso morale, ossia Dimostrazione che vi ha nell'uomo un naturale criterio di approvazione e di biasimo, riguardante l'intrinseca morale differenza del giusto e dell'ingiusto: il quale unitamente alla nozione dell'ordine e del bello, nasce dalla facoltà che ha l'uomo di conoscere il vero* (Turin, 1755), and finally the *Discours philosophique sur l'homme considéré relativement à l'état de nature et à l'état de société* (Turin, 1769).

**5.4.3** Gerdil's history of philosophy opens with the definition of its subject: "Philosophy contains what we know of God by natural means, what we know of ourselves, and what we understand of the nature of things". Philosophical knowledge is structured into the subjects of theology, epistemology, ethics, and physics, but its theoretical and human fulfilment can only be reached through theology and religion. It is religion that teaches man how to live. Religion is "wise"; any philosophy that inclines man to egoism and misanthropy, on the other hand, is "wretched", as the life of Myson, one of the "seven wise men", illustrates (Naples ed., pp. 464–465). For Gerdil, there can be no conflict between reason and faith. When presenting the

*Esame delle opinioni degli antichi filosofi*, he criticises the insidious attitude of those who undermine reason to proclaim the fideistic acceptance of supreme truths (such as the existence of God, his providence, and the spirituality and immortality of the human soul), in order to raise a whole series of difficulties that make the truths of faith unsustainable, thus opening the door to atheism (*Introduzione allo studio della religione*, II, Venice, 1836, pp. 162–163). In conclusion, one can say that in Gerdil the history of philosophy is seen as a reflection of the development of reason, with the crucial assistance of the force and authority of religion. The follies of reason grew precisely when this supernatural aid was missing.

#### **5.4.4 *Histoire des sectes des philosophes/Istoria delle scuole dei filosofi***

**5.4.4.1** The *Istoria delle scuole dei filosofi* (the Italian title) is divided into 24 paragraphs, each of which has a title. Five paragraphs are devoted to philosophy “among ancient peoples outside Greece” (pp. 464–465). The treatment of the philosophical schools in Greece and Magna Graecia is more extensive and better structured (pp. 464–473). There then comes a short paragraph on Arab philosophy (p. 473), followed by “philosophy among Christians until the beginning of Scholasticism” (pp. 473–474). The Scholastics are covered in a single paragraph (pp. 474–475). The “philosophers of the ‘restoration’ of letters until the renewal of Philosophy” are then presented (pp. 475–476). The longest paragraph deals with modern philosophy (pp. 476–483). The last paragraph, the 24th, concerns “some philosophers who founded no schools” (pp. 483–486): here we find Mersenne, Pascal, and Locke, but also men of learning and polygraphs, such as the celebrated Nicéron, who are mentioned for the contribution they made to the development of sciences.

**5.4.4.2** Gerdil observes the traditional division into periods. Barbarian philosophy is followed by Greek philosophy, which begins with the seven wise men. The history of Greek philosophy is above all the history of philosophical “schools”: the oldest are the Ionic and the Italic, “to which all the others that derive from them usually refer” (p. 466). With the ‘eclectic’ school, also called “new Platonism” (p. 472), the ancient period comes to an end. Scholasticism is presented in a unitary manner, omitting the customary division into periods and schools. Moreover, in Gerdil’s treatment, it does not begin in the Carolingian age but at the time of Abelard, when “the writings of Aristotle, translated from Arabic into Latin, came to the schools and monasteries”. The period that followed Scholasticism is that of the “restoration of letters”, linked to the fall of Constantinople into the hands of the Turks, even though in the previous century “Italy had [already] produced men superior [Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio] to those that came to our regions from Greece”. The last period is that of the “renewal of philosophy”, which was initiated by Copernicus, described as the “head of modern philosophers” (pp. 475–476), and it ends with Newton, whose teachings are still considered valid.

**5.4.4.3** The brevity and schematic style of his work do not prevent Gerdil from expressing opinions that are closely linked to his educational and apologetic aims. He never tires of repeating how truth is found only in Christian revelation, which is why he never fully agrees with any philosopher. When facing the ‘aberrant’ conclusions of Pyrrhonism, for example, he thanks “Providence for having conceded to us a religion capable of saving us from such follies and containing reason within its right confines”. Epicureanism was obviously the cause of the “most horrific depravation”; ‘eclecticism’, pagan philosophy’s final attempt to save its own identity, also “finally fell into oblivion” after Proclus, “while the Christian religion stood up and will always stand up” (pp. 472–473). Atheism and an “irreligious spirit” have led men to error on both the speculative level and on that of social and individual customs, as is demonstrated by the life of the atheist Theodorus (p. 469). Together with atheism, pantheism also denies the truth that lies at the root not only of the ethical life of every man but also of the civilised cohabitation of nations: here the ghost of “Spinozism” reappears, and, following a commonplace of eighteenth-century historiography, Gerdil states that “Xenophanes’ system concerning the divinity differs little from that of Spinoza” (p. 471).

In short, the defence of Christian theism is dominant in Gerdil and it conditions many of his historiographical verdicts. Plato is appreciated because “he recognised the Providence of the Supreme Being and admitted intelligences separate from matter”, while “his morals agree in many points with the dictates of rightful reason”. Gerdil is ready to condemn Aristotle’s doctrine of the eternity of the world and some principles of ethics that fail in “raising man above the thoughts of this world”. Aristotle’s greatness lies above all in his logic; as he says, “great men arose as long as they studied and practised Aristotle’s logic. But what has happened since they ceased to do so?” (pp. 467–469). Yet not even logic is exempt from dangerous deviation: in the Middle Ages, the study of Aristotle “opened the field to subtle metaphysical disquisitions, which were introduced into the theological sciences. Some bold minds, like Abelard, abused them in order to corrupt the purity of dogma, and this abuse obliged others to dedicate themselves to the same studies in order to counteract these profane novelties and respond to the arguments with which they were upheld”. This was the origin of Scholasticism. Aristotelian philosophy, which served as a basis for Scholasticism, was sometimes approved and sometimes proscribed, depending on whether it was used to uphold or counteract the truth of religion. In this regard, Gerdil comments: “We continually see the same principles applied differently, according to the disposition of the minds that use them” (p. 474).

Still dealing with the medieval period, Gerdil describes Anselm of Aosta as “the greatest metaphysician of the Church after Augustine”. He was a forerunner of Descartes and Leibniz “in his way of proving the existence of God through the necessary connection between the idea of existence and supreme perfection, considered simply possible or non-contradictory”. The philosophy of Aquinas, whose *Summa* “is a masterpiece of method, order and ratiocination”, is appreciated for its ability to prevent “wretched controversies, fatal to religion”. Gerdil also specifies that there is some foundation to “the accusation that the Scholastics filled



large volumes with pointless questions, treated without taste and in a barbaric style. [...] The Scholastics' physics teaches nothing. It consists solely in interminable ratiocinations on indeterminate ideas of matter and form, of causes and effects, of essences and qualities, which tell us nothing about either the true laws of nature or the way in which phenomena occur". Nonetheless, he adds that "As for the other parts of philosophy, it is true that the Scholastics lost themselves in many vain questions and cared too little for style, but one has to concede that they did not ignore anything that belongs to reason, and that some of them had the gift of treating the most abstract notions of metaphysics with admirable sagacity" (pp. 474–475).

When he comes to the modern philosophers, Gerdil tends to distinguish between the significant, positive developments in the knowledge of natural reality, and other themes. Descartes' greatness, for example, lies in his having given "a new proof of the existence of God" (p. 478), and Malebranche's in having seen all things in God, against the implicit materialism of some of Locke's theories, which Gerdil had already criticised in his *Défense du sentiment du père Malebranche*. The *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is considered to be "logic more than metaphysics"; and as far as Descartes' innate ideas are concerned, "Locke is often mistaken", in claiming that there is "no moral principle common to all men". Locke's thought is scattered with dangerous doubts as far as theodicy, metaphysics, and psychology are concerned, and with "false and perilous" rules as far as ethical religious truths are concerned. Even his pedagogical work *Some Thoughts on Education* must be used with caution, though it does contain some valid ideas (pp. 485–486). It should be remembered that these apologetic considerations were heeded: indeed Gerdil's pupil, the frail King Charles Emanuel IV of Sardinia, became very devout and worked for the rebirth of the Society of Jesus, which he entered as a novice in 1815, 4 years before his death.

**5.4.4.4** The *Histoire des sectes des philosophes/Istoria delle scuole dei filosofi* has the characteristics of a work *ad usum Delphini*, and a comparison with the similar works by Fénelon, Capasso and Condillac may be of interest (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 148–151, 278–291; and above, Sect. 2.4). The "instruction" of the young Catholic prince takes place by means of a concise presentation, which contains no footnotes, although there are explicit references within the text to ancient and modern sources. Some of the ancients referred to are Diogenes Laertius, Cicero, Lucretius, Pliny the Elder, Strabo, and Suida; among the moderns we find Buffon, Bayle, Fleury, Duguet, and above all Montesquieu, for whom Gerdil had a particular liking. None of the major modern historiographers are mentioned, not even Brucker or Deslandes.

**5.4.5** Notwithstanding its brevity, the *Histoire des sectes des philosophes* was praised in 1806 by an anonymous reviewer in the *Efemeridi letterarie di Roma*: "The short French history of the *Sette dei Filosofi* is written with great method. All the systems of ancient and modern philosophy are outlined with brief masterly strokes; the authors are judged without acrimony, with fairness and truth" (ELR, 1806, p. 258). In publishing Gerdil's *Opere scelte*, the Milanese publishers of the famous series "Opere classiche italiane del secolo XVIII" pointed out that the most

significant work of the *Plan des études pour S.A.R. Mons. le Prince de Piémont* was undoubtedly the *Histoire des sectes des philosophes*, described as “a pithy history of ancient and modern philosophers” (*Opere scelte del cardinale Giacinto Sigismondo Gerdil* (Milan, 1836), I, p. LII). In the Neapolitan edition (1853) the work is presented as a simple “general indication for a young prince”, whereas attention is drawn to the *Introduzione allo studio della religione*, which offers a “magnificent, albeit partial, critical history [of philosophy]” (p. 466, note 1).

As well as these reviews, Gerdil’s reputation as a historian of philosophy is also linked to his dispute with Brucker over the interpretation of Pythagorean doctrine in the *Esame delle opinioni degli antichi filosofi*. In the sixth volume, the *Appendix*, of his *Historia critica philosophiae* Brucker had attributed Gerdil with confused ideas about the difference between creative and emanative systems. In a letter to Brucker dated 7th August, 1769, Gerdil objected: “Nowhere have I said neither have I ever maintained, that emanation differs little from creation from nothing”. He specifies that the doctrine of creation was conserved even among the post-diluvian patriarchs, and was then permanently consigned to the books of Moses’ revelations, while it was contaminated among other peoples until it became the “highly absurd emanative system”. After this he reiterates his own Catholic orthodoxy, siding with creation from nothing (the truth) against the emanative doctrine (the “corruption of truth”): *Introduzione allo studio della religione*, IV (Venice, 1836), pp. 133 and 135. This dispute was cited by Tiraboschi in his *Storia della letteratura italiana* (Milan, 1822, I, pp. 84–86) in order to show how an Italian scholar had been able to contradict the famous Brucker, but also to maintain that the doctrine of Pythagoras (the greatest of the ancient Italic philosophers) was not quite as obscure as the German historiographer had maintained.

In Italy, Gerdil was considered by Roman Catholics to be a thinker of the first order for most of the nineteenth century. Gioberti described him as “the first most sensible theologian and philosopher not only in Italy but of his times” (*Del primato morale e civile degli Italiani*, ed. U. Redanò (Milan, 1938–1939), II, p. 276). Rosmini recalls him as an exponent of Malebranche’s ontologism, and the *Journal des savants* had already defined him as a ‘Malebranchian’ of Platonic and Agostinian inspiration (A. Rosmini, *Nuovo saggio sull’origine delle idee*, ed. F. Orestano, (Rom, 1934), I, p. 98, note 1; II, p. 392, note 1; JS, 1st August, 1753). Cesare Cantù stressed how Gerdil had brought the spirit of the religious apologist into the field of the history of philosophy: “He defends the Italic school of Pythagoras against the empiricists; against Locke he defends the immortality of the soul and the nature of ideas according to Malebranche; against Raynal religion and a sane economy; [he defends] educational practices against Rousseau, who judged him to be the only one of his critics that deserved to be read completely [...]. Against Hobbes [he fights] the materiality of thinking substance; he shows how wrongly Julian the Apostate was called a model king by Voltaire, and the most worthy of governing men by Montesquieu. This valiant jouster also practised other sciences; [he discussed] the eternity of matter, absolute infinity, and defended Descartes from Wolff and Boscovich” (C. Cantù, *Storia universale*, Turin, 1846<sup>6</sup>, pp. 813–814). Outside Italy, Gerdil’s unfinished *Introduzione allo studio della*

*religione* was soon translated by Adalbert Strobl (*Kurze Erklärung der Kennzeichen der wahren Religion*, Wien, 1782) and was reviewed very favourably by Reinhold in the *Wiener Realzeitung*, no. 47, 1782, pp. 737–739.

**5.4.6** On Gerdil's life and works: BUAM, XXIV, pp. 51–58; De Tipaldo, IV, pp. 341–348; Zanella, pp. 256–257; Hurter, V, pp. 600 e 609; G. Boffito, *Biblioteca barnabittica* (Florence, 1933–1937), II, pp. 169–214; Ferrari, p. 344; DThC, VI/1, cols 1299–1300; DBF, XV, cols 1282–1283; DBI, LIII, pp. 391–397.

On Gerdil's thought: Romagnosi-Poli, pp. 660 and 697–699; Cantù, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, p. 566; Landau, pp. 38–40; Capone Braga, II/1, p. 62; A. Lantrua, *G.S. Gerdil filosofo e pedagogista nel pensiero italiano del secolo XVIII* (Padua, 1952); Vernière, pp. 437–438; *Il pensiero pedagogico dell'Illuminismo*, ed. E. Lama (Florence, 1958, pp. 477–518; Natali, I, pp. 179–180 and 221; A. Gnemmi, *L'apologia razionale religiosa, fondamento parmenideo e affermazione di Dio nel contributo di G.S. Gerdil* (Padua, 1971); Garin, pp. 1001–1006, 1013, and 1410; M. Lapponi, *G.S. Gerdil e la filosofia cristiana dell'età moderna* (Rome, 1990); P. Delpiano, *Il trono e la cattedra. Cultura dell'assolutismo e immagine del potere nel Piemonte del Settecento* (Turin, 1997); S. Fasciolo Bachelet, 'Il pensiero filosofico di G.S. Gerdil', *Barnabiti studi*, XVIII (2001), pp. 29–96 (on the *Histoire des Sectes des Philosophes*: p. 31 note 6); M. Lapponi, 'Religione naturale e religione rivelata nel pensiero del Card. Gerdil', *ibid.*, pp. 97–125; C. Borghero, 'Gerdil e i moderni: le strategie apologetiche di un anti-illuminista', in *Nuove ragioni dell'anti-illuminismo in Italia e in Francia* (Pisa and Genua, 2001), pp. 31–61; *Id.*, 'Giacinto Sigismondo Gerdil', in Ueberweg, vol. 3, pp. 238–243; R. Valabrega, *Un anti-illuminista dalla cattedra alla porpora. G.S. Gerdil professore, precettore a corte e cardinale* (Turin, 2004); G. Barbini, *Il lusso. La civilizzazione in un dibattito del XVIII secolo* (Padua, 2009), pp. 474–478.

Reviews of Gerdil's theological and philosophical works: SLI, 1753, IV, p. 97; 1758, XII, pp. 290–303; JS, 1st August, 1753, GER, 1786, I, pp. 21–23; NGLdI, 1788, pp. 717–720 and 723–725; MSSLC, 1798, I/3, pp. 55–62; ELR, 1806, pp. 233–236 (on the *Histoire des Sectes des Philosophes*), 241–244, 249–252, 257–259, 313–315. Cf. furthermore: 'Éloge du cardinal Gerdil prononcé à l'Académie des Arcades, par le P. Barnabite [Francesco Luigi] Fontana' [6th January, 1804], *Mélanges de philosophie, d'histoire, de morale et de littérature*, II (1807), pp. 227–231.

## 5.5 Francesco Berengher (1778–1831)

### *Abbozzo di un quadro storico filosofico*

**5.5.1** Francesco Berengher was born in Naples on 3rd March, 1778, into a family of Spanish origin (his great-grandfather was an infantry captain under King Philip V). He received his early education from a certain Father Vandus, a conventual Franciscan, who only taught him Latin, however. He then moved on to the study of jurisprudence, again under the instruction of private tutors, and became a lawyer.

Very soon, however, he gave up the practice of law in order to dedicate himself “entirely to the noblest studies of philosophy and to *belles lettres*” (Gilardone, *Elogio di Francesco Berengher*, p. 15). In 1819, he was appointed “Master of Education of the Royal House” in Naples and taught national history, mythology, poetry, and Italian literature, becoming renowned for his great culture and pedagogical talents. He died in Naples on 25th January, 1831.

**5.5.2** Berengher was entirely devoted to his studies and published various works. We can cite here his *Abbozzo di un quadro storico filosofico*, which he began in 1807 and published in Naples from 1810 to 1819 (vols I, III, IV, V by the Stamperia Abbaziana, vol. II by the Tipografia Trani). Besides several poetic compositions, the product of his teaching at the “Royal House of Education” in Naples, he wrote the following works: *Breve saggio sulla letteratura italiana* (Naples, 1822); *Considerazioni disparate* (Naples, 1821–1828), on philosophical and literary topics; *Pochi ammaestramenti dell’arte poetica* (Naples, 1824); and finally, the first volume of an unfinished *Quadro delle vicende del genere umano* (Naples, 1828), which deals with the time from the creation of the world to Abraham’s calling.

**5.5.3** The *Abbozzo di un quadro storico filosofico* has no preface, but Berengher’s concept of philosophy and the history of philosophy emerges quite clearly in the course of the work. Returning to the classical definition, he defines philosophy as the “love of knowledge” (III, p. 11). “It has always been the wise opinion of the most famous philosophers, even the pagans, that in the study of knowledge one has to start from divine things and then descend to human things”. The connection between philosophy and religion is fundamental, since “good government and the prosperity of humanity” have “need for religion”; without religion man is a “pernicious being”, “abominable, [and] capable, thanks to his principles, of any villainy” (IV, pp. 43–44). Man is a philosopher by nature since he “is born with an insatiable greed for knowledge”. The history of philosophy, “from the earliest times”, testifies to man’s innate tendency “to acquire knowledge” (I, p. 4). It is the task of the wise “to examine carefully the relationships between things, analyse the heart of men, study their nature, affections and passions; to learn what drives them to act and what restrains them, what they desire attracted by the sweetness of pleasures and what they undertake driven by the lust for wealth, honour, and power; finally, what they are capable of doing that is worthy of true praise and honour, inspired solely by beauty, honesty and the splendour of virtue”. This function of the wise extends to the political domain: “It is the task of the philosopher to meditate on contemporary and ancient events, add the light of uninterrupted experience to their profound meditation, and suggest and show the rules of wise, just, and opportune legislation to those who govern and have supreme power” (I, pp. 179–180).

According to this perspective, the history of philosophy should be above all the “light of truth” and the “teacher of life” (I, p. 68). But, Berengher observes, perhaps echoing Buonafede’s ‘Prefazione’ to his *Istoria e indole di ogni filosofia*, if we examine ancient philosophy carefully, “we unfortunately find a discordant uproar, an uninterrupted battle, which creates and continually increases a pitiful uncertainty. There is no error, even the most absurd, which does not find some supporter among

the throng of philosophers; there is no truth, even the clearest, that does not find an adversary there. [...] What is built in one school is destroyed in another. What was recommended and upheld by one sect was condemned and fought by another" (IV, pp. 47–48). Illuminating this history of errors, however, is the light of Hebrew and Christian revelation, which comes to the aid of man in his state of bewilderment. By pointing out "all the incontrovertible characteristics of revelation" (III, p. 99), therefore, the historian of philosophy will contribute effectively to the search for and the defence of truth.

### 5.5.4 *Abbozzo di un quadro storico filosofico*

**5.5.4.1** Berengher's *Abbozzo* consists of five volumes of varied length (230, 96, 99, 151, and 35 pages). There are 88 chapters, numbered successively in Roman numerals, in a purely visual attempt to present the events in the history of philosophy throughout the centuries as a unitary whole. The chapters, subdivided into paragraphs, which also have Roman numerals, are untitled, and there is no division either by theme or period to guide the reader. The subject matter is distributed as follows: Vol. I: "Barbarian" philosophy; Greek philosophy from the "fabulous" origins to Socrates and his most illustrious disciples. Vol. II: Aristotle (pp. 3–39), Aristippus, Theodorus, Antisthenes, Diogenes, Zeno, and Phaedo. Vol. III: Pythagoras and the Italic sect, Epicurus, Pyrrho, a mention of the Etruscans (pp. 63–64), and philosophy among the Romans (pp. 65–99). Vol. IV: A continuation of the Romans (in particular the historical events of the Republic and the Empire), a lengthy presentation of Hebrew and Christian revelation (pp. 31–115), a brief summary of the Barbarian invasions (pp. 115–132), and an outline of the Middle Ages (pp. 132–147). The final, short volume (V) is dedicated to the "rebirth of philosophy" and to its modern developments, with a mention of Thomas Aquinas and the medieval treatment of the Aristotelian corpus (pp. 4–7).

**5.5.4.2** Despite the lack of titles and visual divisions, it is not difficult to see the division of Berengher's treatment into periods. The first period is that of "barbarian" philosophy, for which there is no "precise" history. Those that belong to this period are the Chaldeans, the oldest people on Earth, then the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, the Persians, the ancient Arabs, the Gymnosophists, the Bards of the Britons, and the Gallic and Germanic Druids. The Greeks were also of very ancient origin, "descendants of Javan, grandson of Noah", characterised by a "wildness" from which they were delivered by the teachings of the Egyptians and Phoenicians (I, pp. 9–10). Thus the second period in the history of philosophy begins, marked by the emergence of numerous schools, cited here according to the framework established by Diogenes Laertius. But before the Greeks, it was the Etruscans, older even than the Greeks themselves, who inaugurated a new chapter in the history of philosophy (III, p. 64). The Etruscans were followed by the Romans, and it was in their empire that Christianity was born and disseminated. The Middle Ages then lasted from the time of the barbarian migrations to the Roman empire to that of the "rebirth of

philosophy". The long thousand years of the Middle Ages is not subdivided into periods, but Berengher seems to support a distinction between the early Middle Ages, characterised above all by the figures of Muhammad and Charlemagne, and the age which began with the revival of Aristotle: this is the age of Scholasticism and Thomas Aquinas, the "pride", the author writes, "of my homeland" and the "great Angel of the schools" (V, p. 5). Indeed Berengher praises the medieval Scholastics at length, though he specifies that the "rebirth" of physics began with the arrival of the Greeks in Italy in the fifteenth century, after the fall of Constantinople, and continued with the work of Galileo, Bacon, Descartes, and so on, up to Locke. Here, too, we find a long period (from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century), which is not divided into ages or schools of thought.

**5.5.4.3** The entire *Abbozzo di un quadro storico filosofico* is permeated with judgements inspired by Christian theism. This inspiration can be seen above all in the last two volumes, which appeared in the early years of the Restoration. Berengher describes a theistic view found throughout the history of mankind, from its origins until his own time, thus placing himself within the Platonic Christian tradition of Patristic origin: "Everything goes to prove that the history of the true Religion begins with the world and lasts through all the centuries, in the great turmoil of human events and revolutions" (IV, p. 75). God is manifest in the "beauty and majesty of the globe", in the "beauty and usefulness of light", in the "balance" and order of what has been created, in the very firmament. How is it possible, Berengher asks, to deny the existence of God, reducing everything to the random movement of atoms? (V, pp. 14–18). The very history of philosophy itself is a universal testimony to this faith in God. The history of philosophy does not contain "any monument or history of universal Atheism" since "from the very beginning God the Creator revealed himself to man, his reasonable creature" (III, p. 99). Isolated exceptions can be found in Theodorus the Atheist (II, p. 52), Xenophanes, and Spinoza, who maintained an "intolerable temerity" with regard to his "perverse theories" such as the existence of one sole substance (III, pp. 18–19).

It is in the light of these theist principles that Berengher works his way through the entire history of philosophy. Socrates is considered to be "the greatest genius in pagan antiquity" (I, p. 27), and a considerable part of the *Abbozzo* is devoted to him and his moral message. Both ancient and modern sceptics are judged to be "mad" (III, p. 61); the Stoics' ethical and cosmological doctrines are "strange" (II, pp. 87 and 94); but the eclectics, both pagan (Potamon) and Christian (the Fathers of the Church), who accepted the best of the ethical and theological lessons of the various philosophical schools, appear to be "judicious" (IV, pp. 31 and 115). Berengher's criticism is aimed in particular at Enlightenment unbelief and modern free thinkers. Free thinkers are described as "cheats" who "behind the mask of the philosopher have attempted to subvert the true august Religion at its very foundations, particularly in these very turbulent times of ours". For Berengher, at the root of irreligiosity lie errors that are more specifically philosophical, upheld by "men of valour", such as innate ideas, Descartes' animal machines, and vortices, Leibniz's monads and pre-established harmony, and "Locke's doubts about whether

God can arrange some mass of matter so that it can think, as if God could do something contradictory, which is contradictory to Himself" (V, pp. 12–13).

While critical of the irreligion of modern philosophers, Berengher shares some of the philosophical political principles of the modern age. He recognizes the modern doctrine of the social contract in Socrates' teachings to Athenian youths, the future governors of the *polis*. Socrates explained to these young men "that they will be entrusted with public power as the most sacred and precious of goods; that this public power is the union of all private powers; that men, by means of a social contract, will place in their hands those rights that in a natural state belong to everyone; that they will make them the depositaries and representatives of the wills of all men; and that men desire this to prevent the abuses of private power" (I, p. 62). Plato's political thought is seen in relation to "the happiness of entire peoples". This happiness depends on the goodness of the laws: thus, legislation that does not defend "the precious rights of men", that does not regulate the social order wisely, "that does not avoid disorder but promotes it, is the worst misfortune, a nation's greatest calamity" (I, pp. 177–178).

Finally, it is worth noting how Berengher breaks away from the traditionally negative judgement of the Middle Ages, seeing in Scholasticism "the early origin of the type of philosophical analysis that would later become the rich source of our progress". The greatest glory of the Scholastics is Aquinas, the "great Angel of schools", which is how he became commonly known in nineteenth-century Scholasticism. In his works, which were widely praised and translated, "sublime Theology dominates", "the Fathers' doctrines are reduced to a method", "future objections are admirably confuted", "one finds the sentences of the ancient philosophers", "those of Aristotle, in particular, are explained"; in them we can even see the doctrine of "reason of State" and some "sparks of good Physics", despite the "fog" that prevailed during this period. The sole criticism that Berengher makes of medieval Scholastics concerns the "empty Scholastic terms", rightly rejected by the "great" Galileo, who established the study of nature as "the proper object of philosophy" (V, pp. 5–8).

**5.5.4.4** Throughout the work, Berengher frequently repeats his intention to give a brief "outline" of the history of philosophy (cf., for example, I, pp. 9, 106, 195, and 220; III, p. 18; IV, p. 47). By the end of this confused and lengthy book, however, the author himself recognizes that he has created something "cumbersome and complicated" (V, p. 32). Indeed the work is a long, seemingly interminable narrative, interrupted by numerous personal reflections and historical, political, and moralizing digressions. As such, it does not seem very suitable for schools: written in several tomes and at different times, uneven in its treatment, it is very different from the explanatory summaries typical of school textbooks. Lacking, as it does, references to sources and critical literature, it is not directed at the world of learned, erudite readers, either. Indeed it seems to be addressed to a close circle of acquaintances and admirers, to teachers rather than pupils: it is significant, for example, that the Socratic maieutic method gives Berengher the opportunity to make a long digression in which he advises "preceptors, masters, instructors of young

people” “not to begin a course on science with abstract principles, with abstruse rules of some language, which are a source of boredom” (I, pp. 60–62). These people probably belonged to an aristocratic or bourgeois *salon* with cultural ambitions, where the interest in popularization revolved around discussions of the soundness of certain laws, the origins of social life, the need for religion or proper behaviour, and so on. The history of philosophy takes on the role of a *magistra vitae*, a source of guidance and a list of edifying *exempla*.

**5.5.5** Berengher’s history of philosophy, like his other books, did not have any resounding impact on the culture of his time. When the first volume appeared, there was a short bibliographical announcement to this effect in the Milanese *Giornale bibliografico universale*, VIII, 1811, p. 56. It was praised, however, by Francesco Carelli, “royal reviser” of the Kingdom of Naples, who received the request to publish the fourth volume of the work: he describes Berengher as a “man of acute mind, vast erudition, and a strict observer of the dignity of the Italian language. His book is pure, just as his habits are very pure; and I am of the opinion that permission to print it should be granted so that the good path he follows may also be followed by other authors” (IV, p. 150). Carelli was probably one of the circle of people in Naples who admired Berengher’s work.

**5.5.6** On Berengher’s life and works: G. Gilardone, *Elogio di Francesco Berengher* (Naples, 1834). Some of Berengher’s works are to be found in the following Italian libraries: Nazionale (Naples), Universitaria (Naples), Centrale (Palermo), Palatina (Parma), Nazionale (Rome) and Angelica (Rome). There is no mention of the author in any of the usual bibliographical indices (BUAM, De Tipaldo, Ferrari, IBN, including the DBI). The *Abbozzo di un quadro storico filosofico* by Berengher appears, however, in the *Bibliografia filosofica italiana 1800–1850* (Rome, 1982), p. 54.



# Chapter 6

## Theism and the History of Philosophy:

### Appiano Buonafede

Ilario Tolomio

#### Introduction

When Appiano Buonafede was ready to publish the first volume of his *Istoria e indole di ogni filosofia* (Lucca, 1766), just over 20 years had elapsed since the publication of Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae* (1742–1744). Yet in this brief period of time, the historiography of philosophy had reached full maturity, not only attracting the universal attention of men of learning but also gaining the same recognition enjoyed by other historical disciplines. Indeed, it was in the field of the historiography of philosophy that the different concepts of history, and even religion, were to clash in their defence of one or other ideological standpoint. Thus, for example, to find in the history of philosophy a series of authors who rejected not only divine providence but even the very existence of a superior being, seemed to be a confirmation of the attitudes of atheists and unbelievers of the most radical Enlightenment, going back to the historiographical interest that had characterized the libertine literature of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 10–11). To succeed in proving that some notion of the divine (the so-called universal consensus) could be found in all, or nearly all, thinkers and nations, on the other hand, sounded like a denial of the misbelief professed by the most insouciant *philosophes*. In short, from unbiased, erudite, and antiquarian research the history of philosophy had gradually become a field favoured for critical or apologetic activity.

It is in the latter category that we have to place Appiano Buonafede, ever ready to defend the rights of the historically revealed religion of the Catholic faith. Apologetics is not the only significant aspect of this work, however, which also

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reveals a certain Italian *revanchisme* that also characterized Tiraboschi's *Storia della letteratura italiana* (1772–1782). Italy has no representative among the “population of writers” of histories of philosophy, observes Buonafede in the ‘Preface’ to his *Istoria e indole di ogni filosofia*. With his work, therefore, he dares “almost to hope that Italy, too, will have some historian of philosophy who will not claim to achieve perfection but will perhaps remedy our past sterility a little” (I, p. XXXVIII).<sup>1</sup> His would, moreover, be ‘our’ (Italian) way of writing the history of philosophy. Buonafede does not speak of a “critical history”, as was then the custom, but aims rather to capture the “nature” of the philosophy of nations, that is, the characteristics of their philosophy, almost echoing the ancient Aristotelian category, inherited from the Schools, which sought not so much the dynamic aspect of ideas but rather their ‘quiddity’.

This does not mean, however, that this man, author of the first great general history of philosophy published in Italy, was not of his times, as he accepted almost unconsciously some aspects of the Enlightenment mentality. Buonafede was an anti-Enlightenment figure as a religious apologist, but a man of the Enlightenment in his acceptance of the philosophy of nature and a moderate empiricism inspired by Bacon and Locke. Indeed, in the eighteenth century the Catholic Church had not yet imposed its own official philosophy, which it would do in the nineteenth century: engaged as it was more on a theological plane (in countering, for example, the Jansenist movement) than on the philosophical one, it oscillated between the new and the old, between a moderate sensationalism and a weary Scholastic Aristotelianism, both of which were left to the free choice and convictions of the teachers at the seminaries and ecclesiastical schools. So it was that the monk, Appiano Buonafede was also permitted to move freely within the great literary circles of his time: his violent clash with Baretti, his regular presence in the literary *salons*, and his noteworthy didactic poetry itself, with its often frivolous tones, document his intent to become part of that worldly, secular society.

## 6.1 Appiano Buonafede (1716–1793)

*Della istoria e della indole di ogni filosofia*

*Della restaurazione di ogni filosofia ne' secoli XVI,  
XVII e XVIII*

**6.1.1** Benvenuto Buonafede was born in Comacchio, in the Papal Legation of Ferrara, on 4th January, 1716, and, under the name of Appiano, entered the congregation of reformed Benedictines known as the Celestines, founded in the thirteenth century by Peter of Morrone (Pope Celestine V). He studied philosophy for 3 years at the University of Bologna and theology for 3 years in Rome, where he graduated in theology. In 1740, he was appointed lecturer of theology in Naples,

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<sup>1</sup>We refer here to the “Venetian Edition” (Venice, appresso D. Bassi, 1782–1783; 1788<sup>2</sup>, 6 vols).

where, besides teaching, he engaged in the art of public preaching, at which he was particularly gifted. He was first elected abbot of the monastery in San Severino di Puglia, then of the monastery in Bergamo and after that of the S. Nicolò abbey in Rimini. His numerous commitments in the Order did not prevent him from dedicating himself to fervent literary production, with works mainly aimed against the “poetasters” and men of learning of his century. One of the most famous controversies he engaged in was with Giuseppe Baretti, whom Buonafede tried have removed from the Papal States.

In 1754 Buonafede was accepted into Arcadia, the most famous of the Italian academies, under the name of Agatopisto Cromaziano i.e. “Buonafede of Comacchio” in Greek (according to legend, Comacchio had been founded by Chromatius, a mythical companion of Homer’s hero Diomedes). In the following year, he was elected abbot of the S. Stefano monastery in Bologna, a city where he was able once again to frequent literary *salons* and circles, befriending the most learned men of the time and cultivating the themes that were dear to him: the apology of Christian revelation, the defence of the spirit of the Counter-Reformation, the Catholic Church, and the Pope. In 1758, he became abbot of the monastery of S. Giovanni Battista in the same city. This was a period of intense literary production, inspired by philosophical and moralizing themes. The prestige and fame Buonafede enjoyed led the Celestine monks to elect him general procurator of the Order at the Holy See in 1771. In 1777, he became general prefect, which obliged him to take up permanent residence in the principal monastery of the Order, in Morrone near Sulmona. Three years later he was re-appointed general procurator and, finally, permanent abbot of S. Eusebio in Rome. This latter position, proposed by Pope Pius VI himself, who was very fond of Buonafede, was mainly honorary, which meant that the learned Celestine monk could devote himself to his literary and apologetic activities: he completed his great history of philosophy and, by means of bitter and occasionally unseemly criticism, tried to demythologize the widespread deist and materialistic ideas of his time. With his usual polemical intolerance, he also took part in the struggle against the Jansenist movement, which wanted to impress a more austere and rigorous spirituality on the Catholic Church. He died in Rome on 17th December, 1793.

**6.1.2** Throughout his long life, Buonafede’s literary output was considerable. It began with his early *Ritratti poetici, storici e critici* published in Naples in 1745 under the *nom-de-plume* Appio Anneo de Faba Cromaziano. In these, he reviews over a hundred “modern men of letters”, in alphabetical order, among whom are not only philosophers (Bacon, Bruno, Descartes, Erasmus, Galileo, Gassendi, Genovesi, de Groot, Leibniz, Locke, Malebranche, Hobbes, Pomponazzi, Rousseau, Spinoza, Wolff, and Voltaire), but also historians of philosophy (Bayle, Buddeus, Burnet, Cudworth, Cumberland, Launoy, Lips, and Huet). This work almost constitutes a history of philosophy in verse, in the taste of the century, with a long series of “portraits”, where the brevity required by the metre is compensated for by copious explanatory notes providing the historical and philosophical information indispensable for an understanding of the poetic text. Buonafede’s poor opinion of

most modern thought is apparent in his strenuous defence of the Catholic Church, although there are some positive judgements here and there, on Descartes and the Italians Genovesi and Vico, but also on Locke, who had “unveiled” the secrets of human knowledge. More than this early work, it is Buonafede’s *Istoria critica e filosofica del suicidio ragionato* (Lucca, 1761) which comes closer to constituting a history of philosophy, reconstructing the attitudes of the ancients and moderns towards suicide. The work contains a wealth of anecdotes, with moralizing and edifying aims, in defence of the principles of Christian ethics.

Buonafede’s most important work, *Della istoria e della indole di ogni filosofia* [= *Ist.*], was printed in Lucca from 1766 to 1781 in a total of seven volumes. In 1782, the Venetian publisher, Lodovico Antonio Loschi, made a “rapid reprint” in six volumes, introducing an index of names and subjects and, he claimed, correcting typographical errors (‘Avvertimento del Veneto Editore’, in *Della istoria*, 1781, I, p. iv). The other work on the history of philosophy by Buonafede, *Della restaurazione di ogni filosofia ne’ secoli XVI, XVII e XVIII* [= *Rest.*], is presented as the continuation of the *Della istoria* and was published in Venice, by Graziosi, from 1785 to 1789 in three volumes (quotations here are from the Pasquali Venetian edition, 1792, 3 vols). Both works were intended to contrast Brucker’s *Historia critica*, which was however also Buonafede’s most important source, and the other general histories of philosophy of the early eighteenth century, in particular the *Histoire critique de la philosophie* (1737) by Deslandes, “a typical product of the Enlightenment culture that Father Buonafede intended to imitate, not, certainly, in its contents, which criticized religious tradition, but in the lively, easy, light and *agréable* style, quite different from Brucker’s academic Latin” (Piaia, *Appiano Buonafede*, p. 217). Yet the work also contrasted with Bayle, Buddeus, and all the other modern authors who had described the “splendours” of atheism throughout the course of the history of philosophy, instead of acknowledging that in no epoch had “Truth” hidden itself from any man who sought it with a sincere spirit.

Buonafede’s fame does not depend only on these famous historiographical works. He became particularly well-known in the second half of the eighteenth century due to a long list of pamphlets, speeches, panegyrics, epistles, dissertations, and poetic compositions. In particular, we can mention the *Lettera del sig. A.A. medico socratico al sig. G. Bianchi medico Riminese in occasione delle nozze del sig. Duca di \*\*\* colla signora Principessa di \*\*\* celebrate in Napoli nel 1753* (Pesaro, 1753), which playfully advises the numerous ‘poetasters’ of the time to nourish themselves on the food of the philosopher Anaximenes, that is to say, on air; the *De Coelestini Galiani Archiepiscopi Thessalonicensis vita commentarius* (Calogerà<sup>2</sup>, 1766, XIV, pp. 89–115), an elegant commemoration of Bishop Celestino Galiani; the play in proparoxytone pentameters *I filosofi fanciulli* (1754), inspired by Ariosto, which ridicules ancient men of learning (Hermes Trismegistus, Zoroaster, Orpheus, Thales, Socrates, Anaxagoras, and Democritus); and the *Bue pedagogo. Novelle Menippee di Luciano da Firenzuola contro una certa Frusta letteraria pseudo epigrafa di Aristarco Scannabue* (Lucca, 1764), a pamphlet fiercely opposing Giuseppe Baretti, who had accused *I filosofi fanciulli* of lacking humour in the review *La frusta letteraria*. It is also worth pointing out the *Sermone*

*apologetico di T.B.B. per la gioventù Italiana contro le accuse contenute in un libro intitolato: Della necessità e verità della Religione naturale e rivelata* (Lucca, 1758); *Delle conquiste celebri esaminate col naturale diritto delle genti* (Lucca, 1763), with which Buonafede contributed to the heated debate on the theories of natural law; and the *Epistole Tuscolane di un solitario ad un uomo di città* (Gerapoli [probably Rome], 1789), where he maintained the supremacy, both spiritual and temporal, of the Catholic Church over all secular institutions.

**6.1.3** Buonafede often repeated his conviction that “without philosophy” it was impossible to “write the history of philosophers” (*Ist.*, IV, p. 259: henceforth the work will be quoted as *Ist.*). In the preface, he defines philosophy as “the light and companion and almost the element and universal spirit of all [sciences]”. First of all, it “distinguishes, clarifies, and makes ideas certain, puts them together in well-regulated judgements, and sets them out in well-ordered discourses”, giving rise to logic. It then examines the “principles, natures, qualities, and regulations of corporeal substances”, presented as the science of physics. Philosophy also “enriches” and “amplifies the soul”, “provides for the needs and sincere delights of life”, “develops the notions of rectitude and virtue and the foundations and demonstrations of laws, human duties, and natural happiness”, thus revealed as ethics and politics. It becomes rational theology when “through reason one ascends to the first author and most knowledgeable governor” of the universe. The final application of this “highly noble discipline” is “when it approaches the threshold of the temple and accompanies the priests and masters of divinity, and defends revealed religion from the fraudulence of sophists”, thus becoming an apology for religion (I, pp. XVI–XVII).

Buonafede, therefore, maintained the ancient Ciceronian definition of philosophy as “a very extensive, almost infinite, science of human and divine things” (I, p. XVIII). However, the noblest expression of philosophy is mainly that which concerns ethics and religion. “We have no doubt when we repeat”, he writes towards the end of his *Istoria*, “that dialectics, metaphysics, optics, mechanics, astronomy, and other similar treatises are not the true, perfect philosophy, but are preparations and human aids, which together with divine aid lead to the science of God, laws, customs, and well-founded blessedness, which is the true, perfect philosophy”. If, on the other hand, these treatises “presume to stand proudly on their own, they become narrow items of knowledge, of transient utility, pleasing and sterile curiosities compared to man’s highest goal” (VI, p. 13). This principle is reiterated, for example, in the conclusion to the treatise on Thomas Aquinas, written against Brucker, who did not acknowledge Aquinas’ philosophical or theological greatness, although Brucker regretted the presumed loss of some of his scientific works: “If we had his books on mechanics and hydrostatics”, Buonafede writes, “we would perhaps discern the pupil of Albert more clearly in physics; and if he had lived in more enlightened times, Thomas would have been Descartes, as Fontenelle said, and he might have said more. But”, Buonafede concludes vehemently, “this is of little pertinence. The philosophers of the world do physics, and the philosophers of man and God do theology and morals” (VI, p. 109). Without “divine authority”,

Buonafede remarks when speaking of the elevated ethical doctrines of the ancient Chinese philosophers, “morals might appear beautiful, but they can be neither stable nor good” (I, p. 179).

The history of philosophy is also seen by Buonafede from an ethical religious point of view, even as the most suitable tool for Catholic apologetics. The history of philosophy is above all the history of good rather than evil. “I shall, therefore, write”, he declares in the ‘Preface’, “of the splendours of the human mind and the annals of truth, virtue, and happiness”. The history of philosophy is the “history of reason and man”, hence “we shall visit wise men’s private gardens and their solitude, and we shall lay bare their studies and customs and the origins and developments and majesty of philosophy” (I, pp. xv–xvi). With the confidence of someone who is convinced he is on the side of truth, a truth that is ultimately founded on Christian revelation, Buonafede writes that he fears no rivals in the difficult task of writing a history of philosophy, at which so many illustrious men had tried their hand.

Thus Buonafede professes himself to be a historian of philosophy, and also indeed a Christian philosopher, in opposition to those, like the Protestant Brucker, who would have liked to “proscribe the name of philosophy from the Christian system” (IV, pp. 153–154). While acknowledging that “in order to write the history of philosophy worthily it is necessary to be a great philosopher”, he gives the following self-assessment: “not only do I not feel so great but neither do I feel mediocre” (I, p. xxv). This attitude can also be perceived when Buonafede wonders “whether it is allowable to think metaphysically and reflect subtly over and above narrating the bare historical facts”. “We wish to grant this permission with discretion and sobriety”, he states against those who “permitted it as much as they liked”, or “rigorously forbade it”, “above all in the history of philosophy, which as the journal of reason must not reject the exercise of this faculty, should it be useful or necessary” (V, p. 58). It is with this attitude that Buonafede becomes an “explorer” of “philosophical natures” in order to discover “the characteristics and natures of things” and to take useful lessons from them (II, pp. 28 and 168).

In his work as a historian of philosophy, Buonafede conceives of himself as an unbiased judge, frequently appealing to the “rich tribute” of the “truth of history” and to “historical candour”, or what we would call historical objectivity: “We will consult history, without which any verdict would be reckless” (V, p. 10; VI, pp. 154, 196). In this ‘consultation’, however, contrary to the ideal history of the good, philosophical history presents itself as a series of conflicts between the innumerable philosophical schools that followed on from one another throughout the centuries, “from the disputes and darkness of Egypt, Chaldea, Persia, India [...], Greece, and ancient Italy [...], the Arab and Scholastic centuries” up to “the quarrels and disdain and bravado and obscurities of our highly cultured and enlightened days”. Rather than a history of the good and a description of the annals of truth, the history of philosophy would therefore seem to be the “narration of the aberrations of the human intellect”, “a great emporium of fake merchandise”, “the annals of error and contradiction”, “the weakest and most insubstantial of all histories”, a history that reveals “the disgraces of the human mind” (I, pp. xx–xxi; V, p. 242). Yet against all forms of scepticism and historical pessimism, Buonafede still reiterates in the

preface how some benefit may be drawn from the very errors themselves. “It it thus a strength even to know that the history of truth, virtue, and happiness, which are the ends of philosophy, cannot be separated from the history of errors, faults and baseness; and that a candid narration of the rocks and the famous shipwrecks of the human intellect may well be said to be the most judicious guide, the healthiest warning and the gravest and most useful of all histories” (I, p. XXII).

However, the history of philosophy is not only one of errors: it is also one of “memorable precepts”, “elevated thoughts”, “broad views”, and “useful discoveries on earth, in the heavens and in the heart of man”. Its pedagogical value must not be forgotten either, because “in vividly presenting the truths and errors of great minds, it teaches us to be modest in our investigation into truth and it prohibits us from submitting our reason and freedom like cowards to the haughty domination of men who were not infallible; it also teaches us about the strengths and limitations of the human intellect and about the series of philosophical notions with which we distinguish known notions from doubtful, unknown, or impossible ones, and we do not waste the little time we have in repeating things that have already been done or in chasing after phantoms: thanks to it, we come to learn that vain speculation, the spirit of bias, pride, disdain, and a shadowy, enigmatic mind are the characteristics of a false philosophy, and we thus learn to distinguish it from the legitimate one” (I, pp. XXII–XXIII). At this point Buonafede’s apologetic intention reappears, an intention clearly perceived by Lodovico Antonio Loschi in the ‘Avvertimento’ that precedes the historiographical work: “This is the first and only [history] written philosophically, while others are written only eruditely, including even that by Deslandes, since, according to the opinion of sensible, prudent men, besides its superficiality, irreligiosity can never be philosophical” (I, p. VIII).

### **6.1.4 *Della istoria e della indole di ogni filosofia Della restaurazione di ogni filosofia ne’ secoli XVI, XVII e XVIII***

**6.1.4.1** The work *Della istoria e della indole di ogni filosofia* opens with the ‘Dedica dell’autore a sua Altezza reale l’infante don Ferdinando duca di Parma, Piacenza, Guastalla ecc.’, where Buonafede expresses the hope that “philosophical reasons” may always “be friends to reasons of State” and that “legislators and philosophers may reason and reign together in harmony” because “truth, virtue, and natural beatitude are the subjects and ends of sincere philosophy and are equally the basis and goals of orderly society and public law” (*Ist.*, I, p. IX). The ‘Dedica’ is followed by a ‘Prefazione’, where the author describes the concepts of philosophy and the history of philosophy and expresses his opinions on ancient and modern works on the history of philosophy. The Venetian edition (1782–1783), to which we refer here, is preceded by an ‘Avvertimento agli amatori delle filosofiche discipline’, signed by the publisher Lodovico Antonio Loschi which contains, among other things, praise of Agatopisto Cromaziano. The Venetian edition, the *Istoria e indole*

*di ogni filosofia* consists, as we have said, of six volumes rather than seven (as there had been in the original Lucca edition), of a total of 2,000 pages divided into 89 chapters numbered consecutively; each volume, on the other hand, has its own page numbers. The first volume contains pre-Greek philosophy; the second is devoted to pre-Socratic “fabulous” philosophy, the seven wise men, Thales, Pythagoras, the Eleatics, Heraclitus, Leucippus, and Democritus. The third volume begins with Epicurus and moves on to deal with Socratic philosophies. Roman and Hebrew philosophy is set out in the fourth volume. Eclecticism, the thought of the Fathers of the Church, the “philosophical heresies” that arose in the early Christian age, the development of Arab philosophy, and the beginning of the Middle Ages (the sixth to the eighth centuries) are the topics of the fifth volume. The sixth and final volume is dedicated entirely to Scholasticism.

In the Venetian edition of 1792, the *Restaurazione di ogni filosofia ne' secoli XVI, XVII e XVIII* is divided into three volumes, each with its own page numbers but with the 45 chapters numbered consecutively, for a total of 662 pages. The first volume comprises the philosophical “restoration” engendered by humanists and philologists and the rebirth of ancient philosophies. The second describes the “restoration” of philosophy according to geographical areas (England, Italy, Flanders, France, and Germany) rather than by schools. The third volume is dedicated entirely to the various phases of the “restoration” of moral philosophy: the “reasoned” (that is “rational”) theology of the last period of Scholasticism, the moral philosophy of the Protestants, Hobbes and Spinoza, the natural law of de Groot and Pufendorf, and modern political and social doctrines (Montesquieu, D’Alembert, Diderot, and the *philosophes* in general, in particular Rousseau).

**6.1.4.2** Buonafede’s treatment of the history of philosophy extends from the “philosophy of the earliest times of the world” to the eighteenth century. The obscure period that precedes Greek philosophy is articulated according to the facts that traditional historiography of philosophy has always recorded: the periods of the proto-relatives and proto-patriarchs before the Flood, the postdiluvian age, the various intermingling of peoples throughout the centuries (Hebrews, Chaldeans, Persians, Indians, Chinese and Japanese, Arabs, Phoenicians, Scythians, Thracians, Celts, Egyptians, Ethiopians, etc.), up to the “fabulous” age of Greek philosophy, characterized by myths and cosmogonies.

Again following Brucker, Buonafede follows a more precise division of the various periods when dealing with real historical events. At the end of his treatment of Greek philosophy, which takes up half the entire work, he thus summarizes its most important phases: “At first the savage Greeks” (here the similarity with Vico is clear) “were led to a more human state by foreign colonies; then, by means of travels and philosophical navigation, they sought knowledge among the most famous peoples; they then cultivated it at home, and when they became adults, they scorned their fathers and rose up to become the masters of the world; finally, they disseminated it abroad, and this sowing was so fruitful that they began to return to savagery in their own country. Since from small things large ones grow, so it was that from two very tenuous cases far removed from philosophy [that is, the birth of



Alexander and Romulus] the dissemination of philosophy took place through the arcane power of the universal chain, which caused so many upheavals in the system and in the history of the human mind" (*Ist.*, III, p. 331). Buonafede had previously distinguished between the Ionic, Italic, and Eleatic schools, commonly believed to be "the mothers of all the ancient schools of Greece", and to these he added the schools of Heraclitus, Democritus, and Leucippus, which must be considered "separate families", and therefore independent (II, p. 273).

Roman philosophy lasted until the time of Severinus Boethius, who was "one of the last few western philosophers" (V, p. 298). Buonafede's division of the history of philosophy in the Middle Ages adds some new aspects to the traditional chronology, and distinctions of a chronological nature give way to those of a judgmental nature. The early Middle Ages are dealt with by centuries, while Scholastic thought is first classified according to the customary threefold chronological division: from Lanfranc of Pavia to Albert the Great; from Albert the Great to Durand of Saint-Pourçain; and from Durand to Gabriel Biel. After this, in order to distinguish between a 'positive' and a 'negative' form of Scholasticism, Buonafede reclassifies the entire movement according to three "lines" of thought which correspond to three different intellectual attitudes: the first "starts with the abuses of reason and philosophy and the subtle, adventurous disputes of the Arians, Nestorians, Eutychians, and Pelagians and goes through the rash questions of Felix of Urgel, Elipandus of Toledo, Ratramnus of Corbie, Gottschalk of Orbais, and the enthusiastic ideas of Scotus Eriugena and the errors of Berengar and Roscelin". This line, therefore, consists of poor masters who "drove reason beyond its limits and forced philosophy to tyrannize theology". They gave rise to "the intemperate, vitiated Scholasticism that Abelard, a famous master, transmitted to his disciples" and which was then passed on to several others. "The other line, ignoring the first and oldest confuters of this intemperance, started with the good monks who studied the holy books in depth and were cultivators of reason and science to the advantage, and in defence, of theology, as far as this was possible given the obscurity of the times. This line passed through the divine and human studies of Cassiodorus, Theodulf of Orléans, Gerbert of Aurillac, Fulbert of Chartres, Lanfranc of Pavia, and Anselm of Canterbury". Here we find thinkers who – according to Buonafede – placed restrictions on unbounded reason: they were "true disputers, regulators of holy and human confines, and masters of temperate Scholasticism". Midway between these two lines of thought is "a third line of doctors who shared the vices and virtues of both" (VI, pp. 62–63).

The "obscure" centuries of the Middle Ages were followed by "the times of light" or the "restoration" of philosophy, which began in the fourteenth century with Lull, Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio and which was to continue uninterrupted, its progress due not so much to the advent of Protestantism, but to those brave men who managed to demolish Aristotelianism, renew studies, and produce the best results in the philosophy of nature. For Buonafede, the restoration of philosophy had deep roots which went as far back as the early Middle Ages, the time of Charlemagne. It is significant that it is in the *Restaurazione di ogni filosofia*, the work which was to celebrate modern times, that Buonafede was to write of the history of the oldest

“restorations”, which came before Humanism and the Renaissance. These began in the East with the Arabs and in the West with Charlemagne, Alfred the Great, Henry the Fowler, and the Ottonian dynasty, which, “preceded, accompanied, and taught by monks, priests, and popes, constituted the first dawn of the literary and philosophical restoration in the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries” (*Rest.*, I, p. 4). A “step forward, albeit interrupted, in scientific awakening” was seen in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, starting with Gerbert, Lanfranc, and Anselm. Here we have “confutations of Peripatetic and Scholastic excesses” thanks to John of Salisbury and John of Paris, erudite travels, contacts with Arab cultural centres, the great personalities of Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon, and Raymond Lull, and studies encouraged by sovereigns such as Frederick II and Alfonso X and many popes. Then came the third period of “restoration”, when “a praiseworthy competition” in the fifteenth century, above all in Italy, between men of the Church and rulers, and a host of intellectuals (from the Cardinals Pierre d’Ailly and Nicholas of Cusa to Leonardo Fibonacci of Pisa and Richard Swineshead, Peurbach, Regiomontanus) “opened up great pathways” in all fields of knowledge and “partly drove back the enemies of light”. The sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, finally, make up the fourth era (*Rest.*, I, p. 5).

**6.1.4.3** Buonafede’s historiographical theories are closely connected to his philosophical and theological outlook. From the very first pages of the *Istoria e indole di ogni filosofia* we can see his dominant concern to retrace the principles of natural religion which would later become explicit in Christian revelation to the earliest days of humankind. He strives to show that philosophers of all ages, with a few aberrant exceptions, believed in the existence of God and in the spirituality and immortality of the human soul. He consistently aims his remarks, therefore, against those historians of philosophy, particularly Brucker and Bayle, who saw atheism and impiety everywhere (*Rest.*, II, p. 18). Buonafede insists that the main philosophers of ancient Greece should be acquitted of any accusation of atheism, from the mythical Orpheus to the Stoics, devoting particular attention to Pythagoras, the Eleatics, Heraclitus, Epicurus, Bion, Plato, Diogenes, Aristotle and, finally, Strato. When discussing Aristotle, for whom, as we shall see, Buonafede had little esteem, he points out that while some historians completely absolved this philosopher from all accusations of atheism, others, on the contrary, attributed him with impious beliefs. On this point he invites his readers to re-read Aristotle’s statements on the unmoved mover, which are irreconcilable with any profession of atheism. As to the objections that Aristotle maintained the eternity of matter and the world (“to which God is necessarily linked as a universal soul”) and claims that he restricted the action of divine providence to the first celestial sphere and denied the immortality of individual souls, Buonafede appeals to the following general rule: if a philosopher clearly teaches the existence of God, it is not right to turn him into an atheist merely because of a few errors and consequences for which he was probably not responsible and which might encourage impiety; otherwise, if these accusations were brought forward, “nearly all the human race would be guilty of atheism” (*Ist.*, III, pp. 248–249).

For Buonafede there was only one philosopher in ancient Greece who could be called a true atheist: Protagoras of Abdera. Diagoras, on the other hand, who was traditionally believed to be an atheist, in actual fact denied the provident action of the gods but not their existence, since nobody would want to show that he despises things that do not exist (*Ist.*, II, pp. 325 and 327–328). No atheism can be found in Roman thinkers, either: Cicero, Virgil, Livy, and the Latin Stoics were in this sense unjustly accused. In his historical analysis, Buonafede warns the reader of the fact that some had even seen the Scholastics themselves as “generators of atheism”, because with their mania for debating everything they ended up by subjecting even the existence of God to discussion (*Ist.*, VI, p. 141).

Theism is also subject to Buonafede’s constant concern to trace belief in the spirituality and immortality of the human soul back through the history of philosophy. Along with ethics, God and the soul, which were Augustine’s two great themes, are thus the subjects by which Buonafede steers himself through the history of philosophy: “Without God, morality is absurd, and without the immortality of souls, it is useless” (*Rest.*, III, p. 167). The unity of God and the immortality of the human soul are, therefore, the two truths that he looks for in almost every thinker, regardless of their period, who became witnesses to the *philosophia perennis* that runs through the history of humanity from the divine origins of man as narrated in the Bible. In Buonafede this perspective becomes not only the key to interpreting philosophical history but an apologetic religious argument against the “devastating philosophy” of his century, when “the goddess of matter”, who in other centuries had always been “deaf and dumb”, had suddenly started “to hear” and “to speak” (*Rest.*, III, pp. 176, 180).

However, if Buonafede does not allow the history of philosophy to be read in an atheist or impious light, neither can it be read in a pantheistic, or Spinozist key; and this is the other dominant concern that runs throughout his work. Buonafede declares himself to be against “those who seek pantheism everywhere” (*Ist.*, I, p. 228), thus distorting the moral spirit and disrupting orderly civilized life. In the interpretation of the history of philosophy, looking for the “horrendous monster” of Spinozism everywhere (*Rest.*, I, p. 204) was a widespread tendency of historians of philosophy, who frequently sought the precursors of, or references to, this doctrine before Spinoza, even in the ancient philosophies of India. This is not only a “useless” and “pernicious curiosity”, but above all a “violation of doctrine”: there is a difference between “old and new impieties”, which is why Spinoza “could only have pulled his monster out from his haughty, difficult, and licentious mind” (*Rest.*, III, p. 17).

To these impieties and errors (atheism, materialism, and pantheism) Buonafede also adds “that culprit, Machiavellianism, that disrupts morals”, which played such a role in the modern age, above all in his “poor times, when it is the stupid who triumph” (*Ist.*, IV, p. 140; V, p. 116). Machiavellianism must be traced back in the history of philosophy to be disproved and condemned. The moralistic spirit that pervades all Buonafede’s historiographic work, even to the point of intolerance, can be seen, for example, in his comment on the dreadful fate of Giulio Cesare Vanini, who was burnt at the stake after having had his tongue cut out for having rejected

“spirits and God publicly”: “the inhumanity may be called injustice; yet curbing and punishing monsters that are enemies of heaven will always be praiseworthy and right” (*Rest.*, III, p. 10).

In Buonafede, the history of philosophy, therefore, is presented as an apology for Biblical Christian revelation and the Catholic Church, which he sees as the guardian of this revelation. This gives rise to his continual polemic with Protestantism, which, together with the spirit of free enquiry, had introduced principles that perturbed morals and theology and separated many believers from the Church of Rome. Buonafede’s historiographical theories are thus interwoven with his theology of history, completely centred on the “axiom” with which he concludes the *Restaurazione di ogni filosofia*: “Without heavenly order there never was, nor will there ever be, any order on Earth”. Indeed at the beginning of the *Istoria e indole di ogni filosofia*, almost like Vico, he declares that at the very outset of history “the founders of nations and kingdoms were always accompanied” not only “by arts and sciences”, but also, and above all, “by priesthood and religion”, in a close alliance between the altar and the sword, “and they thus obtained respect and love”. The philosophers of the various ages have to be judged in the light of these eternal principles, which constitute the “principal highways of sound truth” (*Ist.*, I, p. 245; *Rest.*, I, p. 8).

This attitude might also be at the root of Buonafede’s aversion to all philosophies of “enthusiasm”. The first to be affected by “enthusiasm” was the philosophy of Plato: “Everything of his is metaphysical”, and, as it is a metaphysics that is “spoilt by the boldness of poetry and by enthusiasm”, it comes as no surprise that there should be an “innumerable multitude of comments, doubts, questions, quarrels, and complaints” concerning his theories (*Ist.*, III, p. 145). The entire Platonic, or Platonizing, tradition is accused of “enthusiasm”. One great “enthusiast” was Marsilio Ficino, who “was convinced that he would always find the truth in his Plato and even went so far as to attribute him with the dogmas of faith and revealed mysteries, to such an extent that he distorted his thought and subjected him to the visionary interpretations of the Alexandrian Platonists, who added their endless absurdities to the sublime shadows of this philosopher” (*Ist.*, VI, p. 198). The Alexandrian philosophers were also “sublime doctors of enthusiasm”, especially Plotinus and Iamblichus, whom Buonafede liberally targets with his derogatory epithets (“visionary, melancholic, and, we can also say furious and insane”: *Ist.*, V, p. 10). The heirs to this “philosophical enthusiasm” were the theosophs of the modern age, headed by Paracelsus, and the Cabbala, which arose in the first centuries of the Diaspora: “The theoretical cabbala was a mixture of Hebraism and Christianity contaminated by Oriental, Greek, Egyptian, Alexandrian, and eclectic enthusiasm and frenzy, aggravated by a very strange use of language, with monstrous images and delirious reasoning”; the “cabbalist madness” was a “shapeless and vulgar compound of almost all the impious and brutal forms of madness spoken or written in theogony and cosmogony by thoughtless or reckless minds” (*Ist.*, V, p. 240). Indeed all “enthusiasts” and “fanatics”, from the Gnostics to the Quakers, always ended up by “becoming delirious” (*Rest.*, I, p. 160).

By contrast, and again following Brucker, eclecticism seems to Buonafede to be the most mature and valid of all the schools of philosophy. Above all he appreciates the method adopted by the eclectics: "Without regard for anyone and without being slaves to tradition, consensus, age, authority, and other prejudices, whatever they be, they examine, discuss, choose, reject, and think for themselves, and they make from all the philosophies one that is a friend to freedom and to truth, wherever it is to be found". This is, Buonafede remarks again, echoing not only Brucker but also the article *Éclectisme* in the *Encyclopédie* (see above, Sect. 1.3), "a noble and very ancient type of philosophizing, which was born when great souls wanted to be lords and free, like men in the state of nature, where everything belonged to everybody. They read, saw, travelled, questioned the Egyptian, the Chaldean, the Indian, the Phoenician, and the Greek, collected the scattered truths and returned laden with the knowledge of all peoples". The syncretists were also eclectics, but in a perverted way, since they claimed to "reconcile contradictions", rashly adopting doctrines near and far, true and false, in order to put them together and create "monsters" (*Ist.*, V, pp. 1–2). Buonafede also, therefore, supports eclecticism in its modern version, that is to say, the "critical and judicious way of choosing [. . .], ordering, assembling, and legitimately reconciling the sentences and truths scattered around in the various sects". In the course of history there have been many attempts to formulate this philosophy, which were "not always fortunate" but "always praiseworthy" (*Rest.*, I, p. 113). Without touching the rights of religious dogma, "eclectic realism" (not an "eclecticism that goes as far as enthusiasm", as in the case of Ammonius: *Ist.*, V, p. 52) corresponds to Buonafede's philosophical position, and it is in the light of this that he judges virtually all the history of philosophical thought.

These considerations throw some light on Buonafede's continual polemic against Aristotle and Peripateticism, in particular Scholastic Aristotelianism, which he perceives as having led to much vacuity and subtlety, spreading "shadows" and "obscurity" (*Ist.*, III, p. 252; *Rest.*, I, pp. 53 and 103). With Aristotelian commentators, both ancient and modern, night became "blackier than chaos" (*Rest.*, I, pp. 43 and 237). For Buonafede, even Aristotle can be compared to the 'enthusiasts', since in metaphysics and physics he "listened to his fantasies"; his moral and political doctrines, moreover, are unwieldy and antiquated (*Ist.*, I, p. 239; III, p. 266). Some "Aristotelian merits" are acknowledged, but only in the field of natural history and anatomy. For the rest, negative judgements follow thick and fast, even becoming offensive: "infamous philosopher", "plebeian, puerile, and reckless", "ungrateful" and "without virtues" (*Ist.*, III, pp. 168, 230, 245, and 254). Buonafede writes that it is only out of respect for history, and bearing in mind the "corruptions" and the "confusion of Aristotle's books", both of which have accumulated over the centuries, that he dwells upon the cornerstones of Aristotelian doctrine: prime matter, substantial form, nature, privation, and entelechy.

Scholasticism is also drawn into this criticism of any form of philosophical extreme. Having become "great and superb", dialectics ended up governing philosophy and theology, and united with Aristotle's metaphysics gave rise to Scholasticism, which for a long time represented "an insult to reason and the

corruption of theology" (*Ist.*, VI, pp. 27–28). Here, too, there is no lack of polemic: Buonafede speaks disparagingly of the "Scholastic dunghill", in which, however, Leibniz had seen "hidden gold"; he also uses the term "Scholastic mud" (*Rest.*, I, pp. 15 and 95), making no distinction between his own expression and Brucker's "sterquilinum scholasticum". That being said, he does concede, that not all Scholastics were the same, "neither did they [all] shamefully confuse philosophy and theology". This is why the Protestant Brucker's depiction of Scholasticism seems to Buonafede to be "murky", a "romance that is not only imaginary but also slanderous" (*Ist.*, VI, pp. 12 and 89). Buonafede therefore feels the need to give a more nuanced interpretation of Scholasticism, one in which he is more benevolent towards the main thinkers, from Gerbert of Aurillac to Duns Scotus himself: Scotus let himself be carried away by his love of subtleties, but he also devoted himself to commenting on the Holy Scriptures and theological studies without committing any errors. It seems clear, however, that this reappraisal of Scholasticism serves to defend Catholicism against the malevolent criticisms of the Protestant world, particularly those of Brucker.

Yet Buonafede reveals himself to be not only anti-Peripatetic and anti-Scholastic, but also equally anti-modern, continually at war with his age, wanting to strike out at the widespread attitude of unbelief, "the enthusiasm of the libertine revolution", the perversion of those who deny that revelation has any value, thus undermining the foundations of all morals (*Ist.*, I, p. 198; III, p. 100; V, pp. 116, 213, and 249; *Rest.*, I, p. 173; III, pp. 28, 105, 177, and 209). Bayle is accused of promoting atheism, while the Enlightenment is accused of having reduced morals to the "benefit of society" and to the search for utility, producing "ruins rather than restoration" in the field of philosophy (*Ist.*, III, p. 209; *Rest.*, III, pp. 159–160 and 181). Yet not even Father Buonafede is completely free from the influence of Enlightenment culture. In this regard it is sufficient to think of the anti-metaphysical spirit that can be sensed throughout his history of philosophy, which is blatantly expressed not only in his criticism of Aristotle and the "enthusiasm" of the Neoplatonists, but also when he mentions, for example, the monumental theoretical treatises of Christian Wolff. As he himself states, even his judgement of the Middle Ages is, at least in part, in line with that of the Enlightenment, while he clearly appreciates the scientific progress of modern times and the protagonists of the scientific revolution: first of all, Bacon, Kepler, and Copernicus, but also Galileo, who knew how to bring to fruition what others had only glimpsed.

Finally, he perceives the questionable Locke, together with John Selden and Samuel Clarke, to be one of the "least erroneous" of the British thinkers in the field of moral science (*Rest.*, III, p. 115). "Without being a physicist and far less a mathematician, he overcame all these and other contemporary dialectics, and then rose to the same level as the elegant and lively English writers, illustrious physicians, free jurists, politicians, legislators, and bold theologians. Such a man, who aroused so much controversy in his days and still arouses it in every region of this new philosophical country, deserves our attention for a moment" (*Rest.*, II, p. 176). Thus, in a truly uncharacteristic tone, Buonafede justifies his lingering over Locke's works, in particular the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which

hold the essence of what he defines as “logical and metaphysical Lockism”. All told, we can say that Buonafede did actually try to a certain extent to find a compromise between Catholicism and modern culture.

**6.1.4.4** From the methodological point of view, Buonafede’s history of philosophy presents two perspectives: one is biographical and narrative, where the moral and intellectual portrait of the various thinkers or philosophical schools is set out with material taken from ancient and modern authors; the other is critical, which is why Buonafede contests, frequently in a polemical tone, those historians of philosophy who criticized the Catholic tradition or rejected the set of natural truths that he sees as having always existed for mankind. In this perspective, he reinterprets not only the ancient Greek and Roman age but also the earliest philosophical periods, with the aim of stressing the moral and religious values of those epochs. On more than one occasion, however, he claims that he is an impartial judge who does not wish to go beyond the “restrictions of history”, even in the case of more recent ages (*Rest.*, III, p. 105). A historical account, therefore, “must be purged of fables” and brought as close as possible to truth; yet on the contrary, there are many who “wishing to be interpreters, ceased to be historians” (*Ist.*, III, pp. 69, 135). When writing of Leibniz, for example, after mentioning the consensus and criticism that greeted his doctrines, Buonafede declares: “As is our style, we shall follow a middle course, and, far both from excessive admiration and from ill will, we see in him not the counsellor and courtier and idol of Mainz, Hannover, Berlin, and Vienna, not the friend of the greatest sovereign of Russia, nor the confidant of Sophia, Queen of Prussia, of Wilhelmina, Princess of Wales, and of Elisabeth, Duchess of Orléans, but Leibniz, the bare philosopher; and we shall see, hearkening more his doctrines than others’ hearsay, that he had much credit in the restoration of philosophy: not all those that his worshippers attribute to him, but neither did he have all the defects denounced by his detractors” (*Rest.*, II, pp. 86–87).

For this reason, when wondering “whether it is possible to think metaphysically and reflect subtly in history going beyond the bare narration of facts”, Buonafede says that he did not want to leave any room for “useless, repetitive reflections”, and declares: “We intend to write for men who like to reflect for themselves, not for boys who want to be led step by step” (*Ist.*, III, p. 58). When history provides few “truthful records” and it is not possible to subject the “genuineness” of the documents in our possession to a critical verification, as is above all the case with ancient times, it will be opportune to stay on the level of a “modest historical Pyrrhonism” (*Ist.*, I, p. 155; II, p. 240). Contrary to the contemporary taste for anecdotes, Buonafede says he does not wish to linger over biographical episodes which may be of greater or lesser significance, but wants to hasten “towards doctrines, which are always the greatest, or certainly the least small, part of philosophers’ lives” (*Ist.*, III, p. 287).

Buonafede’s work also aims to distinguish itself by its accessibility compared to previous works on the history of philosophy. “The nature of my work”, he stresses, “rejects presentations that are too detailed” and “prolix discussions” (*Ist.*, III, pp. 69 and 299–300). In dealing with the philosophy of the Arabs, for instance, he intends “to restrict himself to a sober idea of some of the main characters” (V, p. 251).

Similarly, in his treatment of Stoic doctrine, Buonafede aims to restrict himself to the “simplicity of the main themes” (III, p. 307). “I do not like the accusation of being a man of quantity”, he explicitly states: “philosophy is expressed in two words, ignorance in a thousand” (I, p. 69). Therefore, all the modern historians of philosophy, in particular Brucker (whose *Historia critica* can however be included “among the greatest literary achievements, not only of Germany but of all our age”), are accused of prolixity. Their books, Buonafede observes, repeating fairly widespread criticism, “are of excessive prolixity”; in them “the same stories are repeated”, “minor things, such as chronological matters, are expounded and discussed with a diligence that is wearisome”; in the end philosophical systems come to seem fragmentary and tiresome, lacking an underlying theme, and “frequently, after endless discussions one feels disappointed at not having gleaned anything” (I, pp. XXXIII–XXXIV). Hence, with regard to his own history of philosophy, he warns readers: “I shall use the information and discoveries of the scholars praised in this preface and of others I have not yet mentioned, and above all I shall make use of the stupendous work of the brave Brucker, revealing and correcting, however, as far as my fragility will permit, their gravest misunderstandings, particularly in the field of religion. [...] I shall reject prolixity, pettiness, superfluity, and erudite ostentation; I shall narrate and almost depict customs and systems in their essential and true aspects; I shall not corrupt others’ opinions with my own; I shall love modest conjecture instead of inventing rash theories; I shall know how to doubt and fear; I shall remain silent when history, whose laws I respect, remains silent; I shall not presume to defeat invincible shadows and, when necessary, I shall not be ashamed to confess candidly an unavoidable ignorance” (I, p. XXXVII).

Buonafede’s presentation of Platonic thought provides an example of his independence from traditional historiography of philosophy. He does not accept the threefold division into dialectic, “contemplative”, and ethical philosophy and rejects a systematic treatment, “because we know that Plato himself did not want it, and he scattered his doctrines around without any order, some in one place, some in another, according to his mood”. His dialectics, whose borders are hazy, will thus be considered together with “contemplative philosophy”, and subsequently his most famous ethical doctrines will be mentioned; “Anyone who would like to exhibit greater diligence, would be tediously useless” (III, pp. 139–140). Faithfulness to history is, therefore, the characteristic of Buonafede’s method, or at least that is his avowed intention. However, his professed narrative sobriety does not exclude his widespread apology of the Catholic tradition, which is often irrelevant. Thus his methodological choices also serve his religious purposes, which are always the principal aim of his work: identifying the “nature”, or the characteristics, of the various philosophical systems, and his subsequent critical evaluation of these systems, always serves to defend the perennial Christian truth which, for Buonafede, can be traced throughout the history of mankind.

**6.1.5** Upon their publication, the two works by Buonafede, which together constitute his general history of philosophy, received both criticism and praise. In the *république des lettres* this ‘history’ must have seemed rather pretentious, since



Buonafede assumed the role of critic and master, even of Brucker, the father of modern historiography of philosophy. Such temerity gradually turned into a sort of bravado, accompanied by the dogmatic certainties of this man of the Church. This provoked irritation among French intellectuals, but it also explains the praise that the work received in Catholic circles in Italy. Reviewing the *Istoria e indole di ogni filosofia*, the journal *Efemeridi letterarie di Roma* highlighted the war waged “with very forceful reasoning” against “libertine spirits, enemies of the gentle yoke” of the Christian religion, such as Rousseau. Thus the “brief defence of the spirit of intolerance” that Buonafede had written at the end of his treatise on Christianity was reiterated: “If the Christian religion is true and useful, which is most clearly proven, it must be in the interest of laws and magistrates to propagate and defend it from the fraudulence and attacks of its enemies, first by persuasion and then, should the latter have no effect, by force”. However, some critical observations were made concerning Buonafede’s historiographical method: the style is “elegant” but “verbose”; “although the portraits of the philosophers are well drawn, we would have preferred a livelier, more general picture of philosophy and of the progress of the human spirit in their place; in short, a history of philosophy rather than a history of the philosophers” (ELR, 1772, I, pp. 52–53 and 55). Yet some years later, when the *Efemeridi letterarie* presented the *Restaurazione di ogni filosofia*, there was no such criticism, and the “criterion”, the “doctrine”, the “historical, erudite and philosophical choice” of the work were praised, as finally providing “a complete history of philosophy which Italy had lacked” (ELR, 1785, XIV, p. 158).

The Venetian *Giornale della generale letteratura d’Europa e principalmente dell’Italia* also welcomed the *Istoria e indole di ogni filosofia* as an antidote to Brucker’s “irritating prolixity” and above all to his “biased spirit” (GGLEI, 1767, III, pp. 34–35). Another Venetian journal, the *Giornale enciclopedico*, taking up the judgement expressed by the *Novelle letterarie di Firenze*, pointed out the author’s apologetic commitment against a horde of enemies of Catholicism: Daillé, Bayle, Le Clerc, Pfaff, Buddeus, Barbeyrac, Fréret and, of course, Brucker (GE, 1781, July, VII, pp. 17–18). However, the *Nuovo giornale enciclopedico*, a continuation of the former, in reviewing the second Venetian edition of the *Istoria e indole di ogni filosofia*, did not share Buonafede’s opinions concerning Rousseau and Voltaire, whom he had presented as two highly contradictory figures (Rousseau: “half Manichean, half Judaistic, half Mohammedan, and all chaos”; Voltaire: “bold and an adulator, [...] tolerant and a persecutor; an enemy of envy in others, but himself envious to the point of delirium”) (NGE, 1789, April, pp. 36–38).

Outside Italy, it is worth noting the highly critical verdict on the *Restaurazione di ogni filosofia* that appeared in Poland in the *Monitor* and was reported in Italy in the Bolognese *Memorie enciclopediche*: “No, Very Reverend Cromaziano, the time for rhapsodies, patchwork, dictionaries, and gossip is over. You cannot produce an endless list of names [...]; you cannot mention a thousand writers offering information about each one’s birthplace, profession, frontispiece of book [...]; but you must go through the systems, compare them, combine them, and with keen, sagacious intelligence set in order the series of errors and truths, which joined together, under one certain aspect, do indeed form the history of philosophy and

the arts. Copying the indices from the *Traité des opinions* by Le Gendre, articles by Father Nicéron and Moreri, and stealing from Stanley and Brucker is not writing a history. There is a singularity in this writer, and it is that he quite openly copies Brucker but at the same time contests him; and he quotes him at the same time as he copies him [. . .]. One must confess that he has a way of speaking that is his, and his alone. He is bitter, pungent and, if one might say so, salacious. It is, then, also true that he is extremely uniform and monotonous, so his readers very soon become bored" (MEB, 1785, pp. 310–311).

Both positive and negative verdicts were passed by historians of philosophy as well as eighteenth-century 'journalists'. Carl Adolph Cäsar was one of the first German authors to review Buonafede's work, which, even if it took Brucker as a model, was in any case "pleasing to read and very precise" (*Betrachtungen über die wichtigsten Gegenstände der Philosophie*, Leipzig 1784<sup>2</sup>, p. 42). Along with him, one of the first to point out Buonafede's work in Germany was Johann Gottfried Gurlitt in his *Abriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Leipzig, 1786, pp. 3 and 210, in the entry 'Neue Systeme der Geschichte der Philosophie'). Towards the end of the eighteenth century, in the introduction to his *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Buhle declared that the *Istoria e indole di ogni filosofia* was nothing but a "sort of declamation" (Buhle, I, p. 9). Tennemann also mentioned Buonafede's two historiographical works, refraining from any judgement on their merit but underlining their unity (Tennemann, I, p. LXXXI). For his part, the Frenchman Degérando wrote that Buonafede's books constituted "the most complete work that Italy has on this subject", but that they "are full of historical imprecisions and declamations little befitting such a subject" (Degérando<sup>1</sup>, I, p. 57). Ernesti (pp. 83 and 110) credited Buonafede with "at least correcting Brucker's unilateral judgements", even if he was indebted to him. Carus (pp. 76–78) even places him before the French historians of philosophy ("revealing greater depth"), and observes that the best aspect of his work is the treatment of the Fathers of the Church, who are properly represented.

However, the person who most honoured the Arcadian Agatopisto Cromaziano was undoubtedly Karl Heinrich Heydenreich (1764–1806), who with his unfinished German translation (it ended at Ch. 22, at the end of vol. II) of the *Restaurazione di ogni filosofia* provided the Germans with a work that filled a gap in the historiography of philosophy of the time: the history of philosophy in modern centuries, above all in the last.<sup>2</sup> In Italy, not even the great Tiraboschi had devoted himself to the treatment of the eighteenth century. In Germany, Heydenreich himself observes in his preface, much progress had been made in the field of the history of ancient philosophy (by Meiners, Tiedemann, Klenger, and Plessing), but little had been done as far as modern philosophy was concerned. This is why he considers it opportune to translate only the *Restaurazione della filosofia*, and not the *Istoria* into German. However, to Heydenreich, Appiano Buonafede seemed to lack the

<sup>2</sup>Agatopisto Cromaziano, *Kritische Geschichte der Revolutionen der Philosophie in den drey letzten Jahrhunderten*, versehen von K. H. Heydenreich (Leipzig, 1791; repr. Bruxelles, 1968).

“pragmatic” spirit that had by then been introduced into the historiography of philosophy by Kant’s critique of reason. He does not consider him to be “dogmatic” or “sectarian” but a *Selbstdenker*, for the most part well-balanced in his judgement, favourable towards modern Aristotelians and lacking the enthusiasm that was fashionable for Bacon, Descartes, and Leibniz, although he was unfairly critical of Protestantism (a comment which is quite understandable given that Heydenreich was a Lutheran).

In Italy Buonafede’s work was readily cited by historians of philosophy at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, and it inspired the *Sonetti storici e filosofici* (1789) by Girolamo Murari Dalla Corte (see above, p. 322). The Venetian Giovanni Triffon Novello (see above, p. 255) also praised Buonafede as the first great Italian historian of philosophy, but did not fail to point out his contradictory attitude; the fact that his excessive defence of ancient philosophers from the accusation of impiety was accompanied by his continual criticism of Protestant writers (*Sui principi e progressi della storia naturale* (Venice, 1809–1811), I, p. IX; VI, p. 357). For his part, Defendente Sacchi, Professor at the University of Pavia, in his vast *Storia della filosofia greca* (Pavia, 1818, I, p. XXVI) remarked that Buonafede, in his intention to “tear the fame of great men to pieces”, ended up by “not respecting anyone”, and thus “having little merit, he earned the scorn of most men of letters”. Buonafede is cited by Antonio Lombardi in his *Storia della letteratura italiana nel secolo XVIII* (Modena, 1827–1830, I, pp. 261–264), which was designed to be a continuation of Tiraboschi’s history. Antonio Rosmini mentions him in a letter to Pier Antonio Paravia of 23rd September, 1820 (*Epistolario completo* (Casale Monferrato, 1887), I, p. 365), and in his early works shows an appreciation of Buonafede’s scholarship, the “soundness” of his criticisms, his “power and elegance of speech”, and his “moderation when confuting” (G. Radice, *Annali di Antonio Rosmini Serbati*, I: [1797–1816], Milano, 1967, pp. 146, 155, 163, and 237). Buonafede was also remembered for a long time in nineteenth-century Italy thanks to the elegant editions of the *Istoria* and the *Restaurazione* which appeared in the series “Classici italiani del secolo XVIII” (Milan, 1837–1838, 4 vols). Towards the end of the century, Giacomo Zanella, poet and man of letters, mentioned Buonafede in his *Storia della letteratura italiana*; even though his judgements were usually very well-balanced, his verdict sounds rather harsh when he writes that: Buonafede “falsified” Brucker, and in a “turgid and pompous style” “created a crazy mixture of the highest doctrines and most poisonous invectives against those who emulated him”, so that “nothing remained” of his historiographical work (Zanella, p. 101).

A theologian and man of letters, philosopher and historian, polemicist and man of spirit, adversary of the *philosophes* but in his own way a man of the Enlightenment, Buonafede combined diverse gifts and interests in his multifaceted character, but the glory on which he undoubtedly set his sights was to become the first Italian historian of philosophy. Yet his history of philosophy has been described more recently as a “not always successful compilation” of Brucker’s *Historia critica*, “frequently badly patched up and deformed” (Garin, III, p. 1000). It had previously been quite literally torn to shreds by Benedetto Croce, who judged it lacking in

“any spark of true genius”, while its author was considered totally incapable of comprehending “the concepts of earlier philosophers critically” (‘La Storia della filosofia del padre Buonafede’, pp. 225 and 239). In reality, new historiographical theories (such as the attempt to reappraise medieval thought, at least in part) and new intentions, which gave an impetus to the history of philosophy in Italy, do emerge from this work, which is not merely a compilation. Neither was Buonafede devoid of a “philosophical mind” and a critical spirit: it was simply that his ‘criticism’ was mainly, if not fully, at the service of his apologetic commitment.

**6.1.6** On Buonafede’s life and works: *Elogio storico letterario di Agatopisto Cromaziano scritto da Agatopisto Cromaziano giuniore* (Ferrara, 1794) (cf. ELR, 1794, XXIII, pp. 300–302; GLI, 1794, III, p. 389; 1794, IV, pp. 89–101; GL, 1794, XCVI, pp. 191–207; MSSLC, 1795, XX, pp. 33–37); ‘Lettera del sig. Antonio Buonafede patrizio di Comacchio, scritta al sig. Co. Giulio Bernardino Tomitano di Oderzo, in morte di d. Appiano Buonafede, 11 febbraio 1794’, MSSLC, 1794, X, pp. 59–60; ‘Necrologio di Appiano Buonafede’, GLN, 1795, August, XXXIII, pp. 84–89; G. Mazzucchelli, *Gli scrittori d’Italia*, vol. II, Part IV (Brescia, 1763), pp. 2305–2308; Lombardi, I, pp. 261–264; BUAM, VIII, pp. 310–311; De Tiplado, I, pp. 402–406; DBI, XV, pp. 100–104.

Reviews of *Della istoria e della indole di ogni filosofia*: GGLEI, 1767, III, pp. 34–35; GA, 1772, pp. 386–390; 1783, p. 454; ELR, 1772, I, pp. 52–55; 1781, X, pp. 27–30; 1782, XI, pp. 163–166; EL, 1772, February, III/2, pp. 32–41; GE, 1781, VII, pp. 17–23; PSUSA, 1782, pp. 284–286; NGE, 1789, April, pp. 36–38. Reviews of *Della restaurazione di ogni filosofia* . . . : MEB, 1785, pp. 310–312; ELR, 1785, XIV, pp. 155–158; 1787, XVI, pp. 26–30; 1789, XVIII, pp. 290–293; AM, 1791, pp. 212–215; PhB, 1791, IV, pp. 235–236. Reviews of other works by Buonafede: FL, 1764, II, pp. 278–282 (*Saggio di commedie filosofiche*); Minerva, 1762, June, no. 4, pp. 39–42 (*Istoria critica e filosofica del suicidio*).

Criticism: K.A. Cäsar, *Betrachtungen über die wichtigsten Gegenstände der Philosophie* (Leipzig 1784<sup>2</sup>), p. 42; J.G. Gurlitt, *Abriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Leipzig, 1786), pp. 3 and 210; Buhle, I, p. 9; Carus, pp. 76–78; Degérando<sup>1</sup>, I, p. 57; Ernesti, pp. 83 and 110; Tennemann, I, p. LXXXI, G.D. Romagnosi, *Opere storico-filosofiche e letterarie edite ed inedite* (Milan, 1844), p. 1394; Cantù, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, pp. 567–568; Landau, pp. 36–38; Motzo Dentice d’Accadia, pp. 95–105; B. Croce, ‘La Storia della filosofia del padre Buonafede’, in Id., *La letteratura italiana del Settecento. Note critiche* (Bari, 1949), pp. 225–240; Natali, I, p. 401; II, pp. 463–469, 504; Banfi, pp. 111–112; Geldsetzer, pp. 19, 140, 224; Braun, p. 202; M.A. Del Torre, *Le origini moderne della storiografia filosofica* (Firenze, 1976), pp. 71–73; Garin, III, pp. 1000–1001; G. Piaia, ‘Appiano Buonafede e le origini della storiografia filosofica cattolica’, in Id., *Vestigia philosophorum. Il Medioevo e la storiografia filosofica* (Rimini, 1983), pp. 215–232; L. Scarduelli, ‘Cattolicesimo e pensiero moderno nell’opera storiografica di Appiano Buonafede’, *Studia Patavina*, XXX (1983), pp. 469–493; *Appiano Buonafede, un intellettuale cattolico tra l’Arcadia e i Lumi: Comacchio 1716-Roma 1793. Atti della giornata di studi tenuta a Comacchio il 31 ottobre*

1987 (Ferrara, 1988); Schneider, p. 56; R. Ruggiero, 'Strategie dell'anonimato. Arti della confutazione tra Galilei e Appiano Buonafede', *Lavoro critico*, nos. 28–30 (1996–1998), pp. 119–142; *Alle origini di una cultura riformatrice. Circolazione delle idee e modelli letterari nella Comacchio del Settecento*, ed. A. Cristiani (Bologna, 1998) (see in particular: G. Piaia, 'Un filosofo senza qualità? Il caso Appiano Buonafede', pp. 135–148; A. Battistini, 'Maschere e idoli biografici: i *Ritratti poetici* di Appiano Buonafede', pp. 221–255; B. Capaci, 'Le postille della fama: dai *Ritratti* di Appiano Buonafede agli epitaffi di fine Settecento', pp. 257–274); G. Solari, 'Il caso Lucrezio e la Chiesa cattolica nel Settecento. La testimonianza di Appiano Buonafede e Francesco Saverio Quadrio', *Res publica litterarum*, XXVII (2004), pp. 172–176; Ricci, *Dal "Brunus redivivus" al Bruno degli Italiani*, pp. 20–22; C. Borghero, in Ueberweg, III, pp. 228–232.

**Part III**  
**The Historiography of Philosophy in**  
**Great Britain**

# Chapter 7

## The Scottish Enlightenment and “Philosophical History”

Francesco Bottin

### Introduction

#### (a) *The “philosophical historians” and the history of philosophy*

After the enduring success of Thomas Stanley’s *History of Philosophy* not only in Great Britain but throughout Europe, the period covering the entire eighteenth up to the early nineteenth century saw no “general histories of philosophy” written in English. It was not until 1816 that the extensive and original *Dissertation exhibiting the progress of metaphysical, ethical and political philosophy since the revival of letters in Europe* – written by Dugald Stewart as a preface to the supplement to the fourth, fifth, and sixth editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* – reintroduced and renewed the literary genre of the general history of philosophy.

James Mackintosh, the former reviewer of the *Edinburgh Review*, later to collaborate with Stewart on the *Encyclopaedia*, explained the situation as follows: “The first general history (only indeed of ancient) philosophy, on a large scale, in modern times, was that of Stanley, formed on the model of Gassendi, and suggested to the author by his learned relation with Sir John Marsham. It is a work of uncommon merit for the time in which it was written, and continued during more than a century to be the standard book on this subject for all Europe, until it was succeeded by Brucker. Since Stanley, we have had no general work of this kind; but some abridgements of more or less perspicuity and convenience” (ER, XXVII (1816), pp. 190–191). In reality, the success of Stanley’s work is documented throughout the eighteenth century. This is attested, for example, by the cautionary

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expressions or explicit apologies Walter Anderson feels obliged to formulate as preliminary remarks to his work *The Philosophy of Ancient Greece* (1791), for having dared to deal with the same historical period as that examined by Stanley. A similar judgement is expressed, again in 1791, by William Enfield in the preface to *The History of Philosophy* (see below, 7.3.3.), even though he recognizes the limits of Stanley's work. Although Cudworth's *Intellectual System* provided copious material for a history of philosophy and although some noteworthy fragments by Adam Smith on ancient thought exemplified admirably how a 'philosophical history' should be written, according to the Scottish reviewer, Stewart alone had managed to renew the genre of the "general history of philosophy", understood as "the history of that philosophy which discovers the foundation of the sciences in the human understanding, and which becomes peculiarly connected with the practical sciences of morals and politics – because, like them, it has human nature for its object" (ER, XXVII (1816), p. 190).

In reality, as the reviewer complains, this work came into being after a long period of "deficiency" in real historiographical interest in philosophy, a result of the almost general aversion to erudition which characterized British culture. The cultural situation in Great Britain in the eighteenth century has been summarized by Leslie Stephen as follows: "In the first place the education of a gentlemen meant nothing then except a certain drill in Greek and Latin [. . .]. In the next place, if a man had an appetite for literature, what else was he to read? Imagine every novel, poem, and essay written during the last two centuries to be obliterated – and further, the literature of the early seventeenth century and all that went before to be regarded as pedantic and obsolete, the field of studies should be so limited that a man would be forced in spite of himself to read his *Homer* and *Virgil*. The vice of pedantry was not very accurately defined – sometimes it is the ancient, sometimes the modern, who appears to be pedantic [. . .]. The general opinion seems to be that the critic should have before him the great classical models and regard the English literature of the seventeenth century as a collection of all possible errors of taste": (L. Stephen, *English Literature and Society in the 18th century* (London, 1947), p. 52).

Stephen is right when he indicates the study of the classics as the element characterizing the eighteenth century, a period indeed known as "the critical age". This definition was certainly usual towards the end of the eighteenth century in the United Kingdom and is widely documented in philosophical and literary works. "Critical Essays" is very common as a title for philosophical essays. We have to focus our attention especially on the study of the classics in order to understand the change that occurred in historiography in general – and in the historiography of philosophy in particular – in the United Kingdom in the second half of the eighteenth century. The major thinkers of the time (starting with Adam Smith, the founder of economic science, up to the great historian Eduard Gibbon) appear to have been educated on the study of the classics; moreover, this interest in classical culture also seems to have given rise to several new fields of investigation (let us just mention the anthropological and linguistic research conducted by Lord Monboddo) and to the tendency to compare Greek thought with Oriental thought, one of the main sources of English Romanticism. The study of the classical



world was accompanied by wide-ranging controversy concerning the method of the scholars or “antiquarians” (a term that in England designated a specific function in the courts) and the method of philosophically-oriented historians.<sup>1</sup> Antiquarians were concerned essentially with registering and cataloguing *antiquitates*, objective documents like inscriptions, medals, coins, charters, etc., whereas “philosophical historians” used literary sources as far as possible, even indirect ones, and “they selected what they thought were the most relevant facts according to a preconceived theory [...]. They discussed rather than narrated” (A. Momigliano, ‘Gibbon’s Contribution to Historical Method’, in Id., *Primo contributo*, p. 198).

Encouraged by Voltaire and his *slogans* (who thus returned the influence previously exerted on him by Bolingbroke’s *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, now greatly amplified and intentionally orientated to Enlightenment taste) or by statements like that written by D’Alembert in the ‘Discours préliminaire’ to the *Encyclopédie* – “le pays de l’érudition et de faits est inépuisable; on croit, pour ainsi dire, voir tous les jours augmenter sa substance par les acquisitions que l’on y fait sans peine [...] au contraire le pays de la raison et des découvertes est d’une assez petite étendue et souvent au lieu d’y apprendre ce que l’on ignoroit, on ne parvient à force d’étude qu’à desapprendre ce qu’on croyoit savoir” (*Encyclopédie* [...], I (Paris, 1751), p. xx) – the French *philosophes* exerted their influence on British historiography, which was about to undergo a profound revolution thanks to Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon. In the context of the clear trend that French culture had imparted on the new way of conceiving history, David Hume’s decision to turn to historical research – producing a work which was long to remain a historiographical model for British historians, *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688* – was highly significant, not only because a philosopher was here directly entering the sphere of the professional historian, but because Hume’s type of philosophy seemed to be widely suitable for sustaining and strengthening the needs of the new historians. Hume’s methodology in studying human nature and the various faculties of the mind seems – even for a writer like Dugald Stewart, otherwise rather critical towards Hume – to have led to “the peculiar glory of the latter half of the eighteenth century”, namely, to the establishment of a principle fundamental to all parts of “theoretical history” (the history of languages, of the arts, of the sciences, of laws, of government, of manners, and of religion), that is, the principle stating “that the capacities of the human mind have been in all ages the same, and that the diversity of phenomena exhibited by our species is the result merely of the different circumstances in which men are placed” (Stewart, *Dissertation*, pp. 69–70).

<sup>1</sup>Cf. A. Momigliano, ‘Ancient History and the Antiquarians’, in Id., *Primo contributo alla storia degli studi classici* (Rome, 1955), pp. 103–104; see also C.C. Becker, ‘The New History: Philosophy Teaching by Example’, in *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (Yale, 2003; first ed. 1932); Ph.K. Leffler, ‘The *histoire raisonnée*, 1660–1770: A Pre-Enlightenment Genre’, *J. Hist. Ideas*, XXXVII (1976), pp. 219–240.

Indeed, in his *History of England*, Hume accomplishes that distinct but necessarily related cooperation between the ‘anatomist’ and the ‘painter’,<sup>2</sup> which he had discussed in his *Treatise of Human Nature* with the following words: “The anatomist ought never to emulate the painter, nor in his accurate dissections and portraitures of the smaller parts of the human body, pretend to give his figures any graceful and engaging attitude or expression. There is even something hideous, or at least minute in the views of things, which he presents; and’tis necessary the objects shou’d be set more at a distance, and be more cover’d up from sight, to make them engaging to the eye and imagination. An anatomist, however, is admirably fitted to give advice to a painter; and’tis even impracticable to excel in the latter art, without the assistance of the former. We must have an exact knowledge of the parts, their situation and connexion, before we can design with any elegance or correctness. And thus the most abstract speculations concerning human nature, however cold and unentertaining, become subservient to *practical morality*; and may render this latter science more correct in its precepts, and more perswasive in its exhortations” (D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, D.F. Norton and M.J. Norton eds, Oxford, 2007, vol. I, pp. 395, 30–42).

Subsequently, in a letter to Hutcheson (17th September, 1739), while distinguishing the activity of the anatomist from that of the painter, Hume also maintains that the two methods inevitably become mutually intertwined: “There are different ways of examining the Mind as well as the Body. One may consider it either as an Anatomist or as a Painter; either to discover its most secret Springs & Principles or to describe the Grace & Beauty of its Actions. I imagine it impossible to conjoin these two Views [...]. An Anatomist, however, can give very good Advice to a Painter or Statuary: And in like manner, I am perswaded, that a Metaphysician may be very helpful to a Moralist [...]. And tho’ I am much more ambitious of being esteem’d a Friend to Virtue, than a Writer of Taste; yet I must always carry the latter in my Eye, otherwise I must despair of ever being serviceable to Virtue” (*Letters*, vol. I, p. 32).

Thus in his works Hume clearly outlines the “abstract and cool” method of the ‘anatomist’ whose purpose is to discover “secret springs and principles of the human mind”, whereas the “easy and engaging” method of the ‘painter’ aims at “alluring us into the paths of virtue”. Whilst considering these two perspectives as incompatible, in his historical works Hume nevertheless provides an extremely significant example of the correct way to use the detailed analysis elaborated by the anatomist in order to draw a historical picture which is unitary and even enlightening on a moral level. David Hume’s *Natural History of Religion* exemplified that it was possible to extend historical research to the most distant times (which supply hardly any documentary

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. J. Immerwahr, ‘The Anatomist and the Painter: the Continuity of Hume’s *Treatise* and *Essays*’, *Hume Studies*, XVII (1991), pp. 1–14; K. Abramson, ‘Hume’s Distinction between Philosophical Anatomy and Painting’, *Philosophy Compass*, II (2007), pp. 680–698; T.M. Costelloe, “‘To have lived from the Beginning of the World’”. Hume on Historical Anatomy and the Lesson of Virtue’, *The Modern Schoolman*, LXXXIV (2007), pp. 313–336.

evidence) if the historian possessed a sound knowledge of human nature as well as of the rules governing the human mind.

Although we cannot explore the domain of historical methodology, which is too vast and demanding a task for this present work, we can find an exhaustive clarification of the problems relating to the historical method in English-speaking writers of the second half of the eighteenth century from some lectures given by Adam Smith in the years 1762–1763, which have come down to us thanks to his pupils (A. Smith, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. J.C. Bryce, Oxford, 1983, Lectures XII–XX). Although viewed from the particular perspective of the nature of literary composition, the problem of history stands out quite clearly in these lectures and well exemplifies that particular opposition between the "antiquarians" and the "philosophical historians" then developing throughout Europe. Indeed, here Smith not only examines various problems of style in historical writing, but, in order to establish the contemporary task of the historian, he also presents a digression on the different historiographical tendencies which have followed one another through the ages.

According to Smith, the first historians were the poets, both those writing verse and those writing prose; and, as poets, they intended above all to "surprise and strike the imagination" with "mythological history and adventures of their Deities". The first true historian coming after these poet historians was Herodotus, who was "the first author who formed the design of extending the plan of history [...] not only of all the Grecian States but also of all the Barbarous nations", with the more or less manifest intention of amusing the reader: "he has connected these together in such an easy and natural manner, as to leave no gap nor chiasm in his narration [...] his design indeed seems to have been rather to amuse than to instruct [...]". By contrast, Thucydides concerned himself with establishing the causes of historical events, so as to provide a complete picture of their causal progression. In pursuing this plan, he was the first to deal with civil history as well, whereas all his predecessors had dealt essentially with military history (*Lectures*, pp. 104–105).

Hence the historians who followed – Xenophon, Polybius, Livy, Tacitus, and so on – were no longer interested in the "marvellous" as a subject of historical treatment; they "made their aim not only to amuse but by narrating the more important facts and those which were most concerned in the bringing about of great revolutions, and unfolding their causes, to instruct their readers in what manner such events might be brought about or avoided" (p. 111). Tacitus in particular represents the highest expression of these new historiographical tendencies. He lived in a period in which the Roman state was at the height of its glory and prosperity. Freedom, luxury, and the refined pleasures of life gave rise to a situation in which people "having nothing to engage them in the hurry of life would naturally turn their attention to the motions of the human mind, and those events that were accounted for by the different internal affections that influenced the person concerned, would be what most suited their taste". The French monarchy, continued Smith, is now in the same condition as the Roman Empire in the age of Trajan; precisely for this reason it is possible to elaborate a historiography similar to that of Tacitus. According to this analysis, Tacitus' methodology is distinguished – among other

features – by “conjectures” which bring to the fore the private events experienced by historical figures, considering them among the significant historical causes, or assign a decisive role to the “inner causes”, namely feelings and passions (p. 112).

Smith is careful to find similar characteristics in Machiavelli and Guicciardini and the British historians. These observations reveal his methodological conception of history quite clearly: in a highly civilized society, the historian has no other task than establishing with appropriate “conjectures” the connection uniting events, while remaining impartial and objective. Resting precisely on this fundamental assumption, Smith’s critical observations do not spare Tacitus either, when the events reported by the latter “are not connected together by any strong tie such as is necessary in the Series of a history of the common sort where the connection of one event with another must be clearly pointed out”, and when these events are “thrown together without any connection unless perhaps that they happened at the same time”. In this regard, he pays tribute to Machiavelli and Guicciardini: to the former because he was “of all the Modern Historians the only one who has contented himself with that which is the chief purpose of History, to relate Events and connect them with their causes without becoming a party on either side”; to the latter because “his whole History is a critical dissertation on the Schemes, the little and often crooked artifices of the times” (pp. 113–115). In both cases, he admires their deep knowledge of the human soul, to which they have recourse in order to formulate coherent historical explanations.

Hence, not only the “History of Poets”, but also the “History of Historians” (p. 104) is frequently revealed to be inappropriate, precisely because it was not philosophical enough: a historical account must constitute a unity not only of events and facts but also of causes and explanations. In Smith’s view, there is no doubt that the historical account must be freed from those “long demonstrations” of an apologetic character frequently crowding the works of modern historians, but it must also be presented as a unitary whole by virtue of that connection represented by a sound philosophy of mind (p. 102).

In 1759, a few years before Smith gave these lectures, the “Select Society” had been established in Edinburgh and had been joined, besides many others, by Adam Smith and David Hume as well as by William Robertson and Eduard Gibbon. Later, as their rich correspondence reveals, these protagonists of Scottish thought were to unite in a sincere friendship and to emulate one another precisely in the field of history. In his letters, Gibbon was often to refer humorously to the “triumvirate of British historians”, namely Hume, Robertson, and himself, showing he was pleased to be reckoned alongside them, indifferent to his rank among them, and always willing to acknowledge his “philosophical” debt to Adam Smith. Indeed, it is precisely from Smith, rather than from Hume, that the two great Scottish historians seem to have drawn the inspiration for their project of a “philosophical history” (D. Stewart, *Account of the Life and Writings of W. Robertson*, in W. Robertson, *Works*, London, 1837, pp. 43 and 54).

As Dugald Stewart observes in his *Account*, Robertson’s historical works have the merit of trying to merge the vast amount of documentation collected by the “antiquarians” with a unitary historical account: “by carrying on a connected series

of important events, and indicating their relations to the contemporary history of mankind, a *meridian* is traced (if I may use the expression) through the vast and crowded map of time and a time of reference is exhibited to the mind for marking the bearings of those subordinate occurrences in the multiplicity of which its powers would have been lost" (Stewart, *Account* [...] of W. Robertson, pp. XIII–XIV). One aspect of his historical works which became immediately evident to his contemporaries was precisely his wish, as an antiquarian, not to sacrifice either objective documentation or a complete understanding of the historical age, since, in a broader perspective, his intention was rather "to point out and to explain the great causes and events", as explicitly indicated by Adam Smith (W. Robertson, *The History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V*, in Id., *Works, to which is prefixed an Account of his Life and Writings*, ed. D. Stewart, London, 1837, p. 307).

In order to attain this end, Robertson introduced several "disquisitions" (or rather *appendixes*) into his works "which belong more properly to the province of the lawyer or antiquary, than to that of the historian" (*The History of the Reign*, p. 307), without interrupting the historical narration. Whether he gives an account of the events surrounding Mary Stuart or Charles V, or the events that took place in America or India, Robertson, as Stewart acutely observes, "adapts the history of such a country to the present standard of British taste [...]. Nor are these sacrifices to modern taste inconsistent with the fidelity of a history which records the transactions of former ages [...], on the contrary, they aide the judgement of the reader in forming a philosophical estimate of the condition and character of our ancestors, by counteracting that strong bias of the mind which confounds human nature and human life with the adventitious and ever changing attire which they borrow from fashion" (Stewart, *Account* [...] of W. Robertson, p. VII).

In Eduard Gibbon, these distinctive aspects of the new historiographical methodology manifest themselves even more clearly (cf. Momigliano, *Primo contributo*, pp. 195–211). Indeed, Gibbon was to write his most important work, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, as a "philosopher", or at least frequently calling upon philosophy for help in fulfilling his plan to merge the primary task of the historian – collecting objective facts – with the need, which by now prevailed among historians, to connect "the various causes and progressive effects with many of the events most interesting in human annals", so that "the expressive conciseness of his description has deserved to exercise the diligence of innumerable antiquarians, and to excite the genius and penetration of the philosophical historians of our own times" (E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, London, 1844, ch. LXXI, p. 1226). Just like Smith, Gibbon particularly admires Tacitus because he was "the first of historians who applied the science of philosophy to the study of facts" (ch. IX, p. 81), and intersperses his historical account of the fall of the Roman Empire with confessions of the following kind: "the confusion of the times, and the scarcity of authentic memorials, oppose equal difficulties to the historian, who attempts to preserve a clear and unbroken thread of narration [...] surrounded with imperfect fragments always concise, often obscure, and sometimes contradictory, he is reduced to collect, to compare, and to conjecture; and though he ought never to place his conjectures in the rank of facts, yet the knowledge of human

nature, and of the sure operation of its fierce and unrestrained passions, might, on some occasions, supply the want of historical materials” (ch. X, p. 90).

In this way, the Scottish “philosophical historians” became aware of having profoundly innovated the historical genre, albeit following a path already indicated by the French historians: “It will not, I hope”, observes Stewart, “be imputed to me as a blameable instance of national vanity, if I conclude this section with remarking the rapid progress that has been made in our country during the last fifty years, in tracing the origin and progress of the present establishments in Europe. Montesquieu undoubtedly led the way; but much has been done since the publication of his works, by authors whose names are enrolled among the members of this society [the Royal Society, to whose members Stewart read a commemoration of Robertson]. ‘On this interesting subject – says Mr Gibbon – a strong ray of philosophical light has broken from Scotland in our own times; and it is with private as well as public regard, that I repeat the names of Hume, Robertson, and Adam Smith’. It was, indeed, a subject worthy of their genius; for, in the whole history of human affairs, no spectacle occurs so wonderful in itself, or so momentous in its effects, as the growth of that system which took its rise from the conquest of the barbarians” (Stewart, *Account* [...] of *W. Robertson*, p. XIV). Voltaire himself, writing to Robertson in 1770, was to openly recognize the worth of the Scottish historians: “C’est à Vous et à M. Hume qu’il appartient d’écrire l’Histoire [...]. Vous êtes éloquent, savant, et impartial [...]. Je me joins à l’Europe pour Vous estimer” (Letter addressed to Robertson in 1770 and quoted by Stewart in *Account* [...] of *W. Robertson*, p. XIII).

Both Robertson and Gibbon (who were not professional philosophers, as Hume had been before devoting himself to history) felt the need for a “history of philosophy” for the benefit and in accordance with the demands of the “philosophical historians”, and they did not hesitate to kindly express this request to their common friend Adam Smith, who had concerned himself with this subject first in Edinburgh and then in Glasgow, and had written an essay, which was subsequently lost, entitled *Taste, Composition and History of Philosophy*, as early as 1750 (*The Correspondence of Adam Smith*, E. Campbell Mossner and I. S. Ross eds, Oxford, 1977, p. 40). But Smith’s friends were to wait in vain, because he never managed to complete the *History of Philosophy* that he had planned and begun. From among the numerous papers left after his death, which strangely were not destroyed as he explicitly requested, his heirs published some essay fragments in 1795, which are very important for forming an idea of Smith’s concept of the “history of philosophy” (see below, 7.1.2 and 7.1.4.1). Indeed, as Stewart asserts, these writings, albeit short and fragmentary, were to become a real model, inspiring the later histories of philosophy written according to the new historiographical demands, that is to say, according to the method of “philosophical history”. In his *Account of the Life and Writings of A. Smith*, Stewart recalls that Smith felt a new historical interest right from the beginning of his studies; in particular, the future author of *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* was interested in “the natural progress of the mind in the investigation of truth, [and exemplified his theories] by the history of those sciences in which the connection and succession of discoveries may be traced with the greatest advantage” (Stewart, *Account* [...] of *A. Smith*, in

A. Smith, *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* (see below, 7.1.2), § 1.8). Subsequently, during the several courses he held on logic, rhetoric, and moral philosophy, Smith was able to carry out his plan in greater detail in the fields of astronomy, ancient logic and metaphysics, moral and political doctrines, and the origins of language. In all these fields – albeit fragmentarily – Adam Smith exerted a decisive influence on the way of writing the history of philosophical thought.

(b) *A revived interest in ancient philosophy*

The historical tendencies emerging to such a great extent in the philosophy of the Cambridge Platonists (see *Models*, I, pp. 279–370) are at the root of both the interest in ancient philosophy which persisted in the United Kingdom throughout the eighteenth century and the spiritualistic views which often characterized a part of Scottish thought even in the midst of the most radical claims advanced by empiricism. And yet, in other respects, it seems that it was precisely the confused philosophical and scientific methodology adopted by the Cambridge Platonists that was the main cause of the rejection – or at least the conditional acceptance – which the scientific culture of the Newtonians gave to the great metaphysical and scientific doctrines of Antiquity. This situation is documented emblematically in an apologetic work written by Colin Maclaurin in defence of Newtonianism against the attacks launched by George Berkeley. Indeed, in the first book of *An Account of Sir Isaac Newton’s Philosophical Discoveries* (1742), Maclaurin expresses quite clearly the attitude adopted by a Newtonian towards those who “have lost themselves in the dark schemes of an inviolable and universal necessity”, or those who “are ever dreaming themselves possessors of the eternal reasons and primary causes of things”. “If we look back into the state of philosophy in different ages”, observes Maclaurin, “we shall learn from the history of every period, that as far as philosophers consulted nature, and proceeded on observation, they made some progress in true knowledge; but as far as they pretended to carry on their schemes without this, they only multiplied disputes” (C. Maclaurin, *An Account of Sir Isaac Newton’s Philosophical Discoveries*, London, 1748 [repr. Hildesheim, 1971], pp. 24–25).

These criticisms were aimed precisely at the major Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle. Indeed, the former paved the way for “unintelligible mystical doctrines”, while the latter, in contrast with the earlier pre-Socratic tradition, introduced his abstract principles of things (matter, form, privation, etc.) which, instead of enabling science to progress, brought it back to incomprehensible abstract discussions (pp. 30–31). His overall judgement on the ancients is therefore inevitably and decidedly negative: “generally speaking, they [the ancients] indulged themselves too much in abstruse fruitless disquisitions concerning the hidden essences of things, and sought after a knowledge that was not suited to the grounds they had to build on” (pp. 38–39). The confused mix of Platonism, Neoplatonism, and Aristotelianism which forms the foundation of the complex philosophical and scientific structures laid down by the Cambridge Platonists is certainly diametrically opposed to the scientific methodology peculiar to Newtonianism, and especially to Newton’s followers, which was based exclusively on observation.

Benjamin Martin (1704–1782) was among those who propounded Newtonian philosophy, as well as the use of a variety of scientific instruments for the purposes of verification. His first work, *The Philosophical Grammar, being a View of the Present State of Experimental Physiology or Natural Philosophy* (London, 1735), is a classic example of a textbook of Newtonian philosophy, in which the conception of the world is not supported by the arguments of philosophers but by scientific experiments. However, Martin also concerned himself with more historiographical subjects, producing *The Young Gentleman and Lady's Philosophy, in a Continued Survey of the Works of Nature and Art* (London, 1755, 2 vols), evidently intended more for the drawing room, and the *Biographia Philosophica, being an Account of the Lives, Writings and Inventions of the most Eminent Philosophers and Mathematicians, who have flourished from the Earliest Ages of the World to the Present Time*, (London, 1764), where, following Laertius' model, he presents the lives of philosophers from Antiquity to the Modern Age. In both these works, the Newtonian perspective is the only key to the interpretation of the lives and doctrines of the ancient and modern philosophers, and their metaphysical views are substantially reduced.

Nevertheless, the constant renewal of historical and philological studies of ancient Greece in the second half of the eighteenth century throws light on a new function performed by classical thought in the 'critical' culture of the time. These new tendencies were originally formulated and exemplified, for example, by James Harris in his two lengthy works, *Hermes: or a Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Universal Grammar* (1751) and *Philosophical Arrangements* (1775). He directly relates the critical spirit of eighteenth-century British thought to the classical culture of ancient Greece: "Ancient Greece in its happy days was seat of liberty, of sciences, and of arts. In his fair region, fertile of wit, the *epic* writers come first; then the *lyric*; then the *tragic*; and lastly the *historians*, the *comic* writers and the *orators* [...]. Now, when wise thinking men, the subtle investigators of principles and causes, observed the wonderful effect of these works upon the human mind, they were prompted to inquire *whence this should proceed*; for that it should happen *merely from chance*, they could not well believe. Here, therefore we have the *rise* and *origin* of *criticism*, which in its beginnings was a deep and philosophical search for the primary laws and elements of good writing, as far as they could be collected from the most approved performances" (J. Harris, *Philosophical Arrangements*, in *Works, with an Account of his Life and Character, by his Son the Earl of Malmesbury*, London, 1801, II, pp. 278–279).

Harris finds proof for his statements in the literary models and above all the theoretical works of the Greek authors. But if Plato and other writers provided many ideas which inspired this critical attitude, it was Aristotle who "as the Systematizer of his master's doctrines [...] developed every part of the subject, that he may be justly called *the father of criticism*, both from the age when he lived and from his truly transcendent genius". "The criticism which this capital writer taught", explains Harris, "has so intimate a correspondence and alliance with *philosophy* that we can call it by no other name, that of *philosophical criticism*" (*Philosophical Arrangements*, II, p. 280). According to Harris, this is the oldest form of criticism



but, in its essential features, still the most important. In modern times, he continues, what prevails is a form of historical and illustrative criticism which takes shape in the compilation of dictionaries, grammars, and translations. But there is also a third form of criticism – which Harris calls “corrective” – which is proper to those whose intention it is to emend ancient corrupted texts, so as to ascertain the *true*, or at least the most probable, ancient text. In this sense, “corrective criticism” (which corresponds to the traditional *ars critica*) tends to become “authoritative criticism” as well.

In Harris’ view, however, the fundamental role performed by philosophy in a critical mentality remains undisputed, no matter what field it is applied to: “[...] to write well upon a liberal art, we must write *philosophically* – that all the *liberal arts* in their principles are *congenial* – and that these *principles*, when traced to their common source, are found all to terminate in *the first philosophy* [...]” (*Philosophical Arrangements*, p. 286). *Hermes*, his major work, is precisely a far-reaching attempt to identify this original kinship between the various literary disciplines by means of a philosophical and conceptual inquiry into linguistic categories. In accomplishing this task, Harris borrows widely above all from Aristotle’s works and his categorial system. Harris’ intention is not to revive philosophical doctrines already largely discredited, but to make use of the profound speculative framework elaborated by the Greek thinker, creatively adapting it to the content of contemporary English culture and the linguistic structures peculiar to the English language.

Although Harris’ work was universally praised not only by the classicists but also by the Scottish philosophers, it was not able to substantially change the Scots’ attitude towards ancient, and notably Aristotelian, philosophy. Indeed, Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, although well-nourished on classical culture, which was actually more of a historical and rhetorical, rather than a strictly philosophical, nature, seem to have been well-disposed almost exclusively to the moral and political doctrines of ancient Greece, and viewed all the other philosophical sectors, metaphysics and logic in particular, with the disregard, contempt, and irony that, from Bacon onwards, had been showered on these disciplines. This situation is clearly documented in the writings of Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart, which both give an extensive account of Aristotelian logic. Thomas Reid’s *A Brief Account of Aristotle’s Logic with Remarks* was first published anonymously in 1774 as an appendix to Lord Kames’ *Sketches of the History of Man*. Dugald Stewart devotes the third chapter of the first book of his *Elements* to the same subject and gives it the title *Of the Aristotelian Logic*.

Reid begins his account by presenting Bacon’s criticism of Aristotle, and adding his own personal judgement on the Greek philosopher: “the faults we have mentioned are such as might be expected in a man who had the daring ambition to be transmitted to all future ages as the Prince of Philosophers, as one who had carried every branch of human knowledge to its utmost limit, and who was not very scrupulous about the means he took to obtain his end” (Th. Reid, *A Brief Account of Aristotle’s Logic, with Remarks*, in *The Works*, ed. W. Hamilton, Edinburgh, 1846–1863, II, p. 681). While “in natural history, the fidelity of his narrations seems

to be equal to his industry and he always distinguishes between what he knew and what he had by report", Reid continues (p. 682.), in the field of speculative philosophy all his "pride" and "vanity" become clearly evident. Then Reid examines the works of the *Organon* in detail, starting with the *Categories*. After comparing Aristotle's subdivisions to those of Locke and Hume, and while acknowledging that the Aristotelian doctrine of the categories "marks a superiority of genius in the inventor, whoever he was" – precisely because it allows a survey of all the notions held in the human mind, arranging them in ranks and rows like a regiment ready for battle (p. 687) – Reid prefers to adopt Locke's doctrine, reducing the categories to three, since it reveals greater adherence to the structure of the Latin and the English languages. Reid also accepts the criticisms raised by Locke against Aristotle's theory of definition, because it "shew that a great part of what speculative men have admired as profound philosophy, is only a darkening of knowledge by words without understanding" (p. 691).

Reid is willing to grant some importance to the analysis of the structure of language, which, he believes, was neglected for too long, before James Harris took it up again in his *Hermes*. Clearly, the fact of limiting oneself to the categorical propositions, as the Stagirite did, represents a serious deficit in Aristotelian analysis, and this is due to the following reasons: (I) there are propositions which seem to have no subject ('it rains'), or (II) in which it is unclear which is the subject and which is the predicate ('virtue is the road to happiness'), or (III) whether they are singular or plural, (IV) affirmative or negative ('whatever is insentient is not an animal'), (V) and finally it is unclear why several propositions have more than two terms.

Further, when Reid moves on to the *Prior Analytics* and analyses the structure of the syllogism, he cannot but remark, with a mixture of irony and disdain, that "ingenuity requires me to confess that, though I have often purposed to read the whole with care, and to understand what is intelligible, yet my courage and patience always failed before I had done. Why should I throw away so much time and painful attention upon a thing of so little real use? If I had lived in those ages when the knowledge of Aristotle's *Organon* entitled a man to the highest rank in philosophy, ambition might have induced me to employ upon it some years of painful study [...]. All I can say is, that I have read some parts of the different books with care, some slightly and some, perhaps, not at all. I have glanced over the whole often and, when any thing attracted my attention, have dipped into it till my appetite was satisfied" (p. 693). Reid has no doubts in asserting, together with Bacon, that this part of Aristotelian logic is the most abstruse; it is formulated too succinctly, pertains to things which are too far removed from reality and, moreover, its purpose is to prove general propositions which are, in fact, revealed to be self-evident. In truth the syllogism was never used by anyone, either the ancient or the modern mathematicians and astronomers, and therefore it was useless.

The uselessness and captiousness of the syllogistic structure provoke Reid's amused response when he comes to analysing modal syllogism. Here, he quotes the witty judgement expressed by Bartholomew Keckermann concerning these *crucis* which weighed on the scholastic logicians, and observes: "[...] with regard to the scholastic doctors, among whom this was a proverb, *De modalibus non gustabit*

*asinus*, he [Keckermann] thinks it very dubious whether they tortured most the modal syllogisms, or were most tortured by them". In any case, concludes Reid, for over two centuries no one has spoken of modal syllogism, although other syllogistic doctrines have sometimes been highly appreciated, so "I shall let this doctrine rest in peace without giving the least disturbance to its ashes" (p. 703). But, apart from these witticisms, his judgement on categorical syllogism perfectly exemplifies the opinion concerning Aristotle's doctrines held in the *critical* age: "Although the art of categorical syllogism is better fitted for scholastic litigation than for real improvement in knowledge, it is a venerable piece of antiquity and a great effort of human genius. We admire the pyramids of Egypt and the wall of China, though useless burdens upon the earth; we can bear the most minute description of them and travel hundreds of leagues to see them [ . . . ]. The predicaments and predicates, the rules of syllogisms, and the topics have little to our veneration as antiquities; they are uncommon efforts, not of human power, of human genius; and they make a remarkable period in the progress of human reason" (p. 711).

Stewart, for his part, examines Aristotelian logic in the chapter of his *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* devoted to deductive inferences. Adopting many of Reid's observations, he reproaches Aristotle, on one hand, for the extreme technicality of his language and formal structures, and, on the other, for the alleged apodictic value of a demonstration based on few abstract principles. Stewart disagrees with the Aristotelian concept that ends up by identifying reason with reasoning. The plan to create an entire scientific edifice uniquely by means of reasoning seems absurd to him and, without hesitation, he draws attention to the fact that, "even amidst the darkness of twelfth century", someone (notably "John of Salisbury, himself distinguished proficient in scholastic learning, which he has studied under the celebrated Abelard") understood the impossibility of such an endeavour: "The absurdity of expecting to rear a fabric of science by the art of reasoning alone, was remarked, with singular sagacity even amidst the darkness of twelfth century, by John of Salisbury, [ . . . ]" (D. Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, in *The Collected Works*, ed. W. Hamilton, Edinburgh, 1854–1860, III, p. 207).

The only part of the *Organon* Stewart is ready to praise explicitly is the *Sophistici Elenchi*, "a book which still supplies a very convenient phraseology for marking concisely some of the principal fallacies which are apt to impose on the understanding in the heat of *viva voce* dispute". It is useful, remarks Stewart, to have at one's disposal a number of technical terms by which the weak points of our opponents can be identified with certainty, with no circumlocutions and no further disputes, even though these terms will not be of much help when one has to discover and identify incorrect reasoning. In general, Stewart concludes, "that nothing useful is to be learned from Aristotle's logic, I am far from thinking, but I believe that all which is useful in it might be reduced into a very narrow compass; and I am decidedly of opinion, that wherever it becomes a serious and favourite object of study, it is infinitely more likely to do harm than good" (III, p. 219).

The criticisms raised by Thomas Reid and his pupil Dugald Stewart, plausible from the point of view of "common sense", ended up, nevertheless, as abstract and

rather distant from the real debate taking place over the role of classical culture in the development of the Enlightenment critical mind. In fact, Harris' message and his teaching did have a profound effect, influencing almost all the exponents of the Scottish Enlightenment and subsequently, towards the end of the century, giving rise to an important school of philology. In particular, Scottish thought was to find in Lord Monboddo not only an enthusiastic admirer of the lifestyle embodied by the ancients, but also a shrewd proponent of a vast synthesis between the theoretical framework of ancient philosophy and the more recent knowledge acquired in the anthropological, linguistic, and social fields. In outlining his great attempt to revive a truly universal system of philosophy like that of Antiquity, which gradually leads to a knowledge of the Supreme Mind through a profound investigation of the sensible world, Monboddo acknowledged his debt not only to Cudworth's Platonism, but also to Harris' conceptual systematization. He agreed with the former in identifying Greek metaphysics as the most appropriate means to present revealed Christian thought rationally; and he agreed with the latter in believing that Aristotle's conceptual categories represented the best and most universal form of speculative inquiry into reality.

The singularity of Monboddo's position consists in taking the great progress made by experimental philosophy during the two previous centuries as a support in his long journey from the earliest human manifestations to contemporary civilization: "[...] as your works first introduced me to the Greek Philosophy, so this present you have now made me has revived my task for that study [...]. I fell on greedily, as soon as the book was sent me, and began with the most philosophical part of your *Hermes*, viz. the chapter upon General Ideas, which you have explained most truly and philosophically, according to the dictates of that school to which I confess I have entirely addicted myself, I mean the school of Aristotle" (Lord Monboddo's letter to James Harris, 26th March, 1766, in Knight, *Lord Monboddo*, p. 48). Many years later, in one of several letters exchanged by the two scholars, Harris wrote: "I cannot enough admire your noble attempt to bring the Greek Philosophy again in fashion. To speak my mind freely, I think, though there was a time, when Plato and Aristotle were much more in fashion than they are now, they were never cultivated or understood in Western or Latin Europe as they ought; and as I believe many of the learned Greeks cultivated them, even down to the taking of Constantinople" (Knight, *Lord Monboddo*, p. 91, letter of 11th February, 1775).

In Monboddo's view, the fundamental philosophical problem was the existence of two substances in the universe which are different and distinct, but reciprocally joined and connected: the *mind* and the *body*. It is the task of speculative philosophy to offer an adequate solution to this problem, by defining in the first place the properties of the mind and the properties of the body, thus providing a plausible explanation for their mutual relations: "the antient system of theism [...] proceeds upon this principle that Mind is the author of all the motion in the universe, which, though it may be continued and propagated by the impulse of Body upon Body, [...] it must necessarily be supposed to be moved immediately and directly by Mind". It followed from this principle that the motions made by animals and plants, as well as all the other motions on earth, cannot be explained by some material or

mechanical cause, but must be supposed to be produced by the Mind (Monboddo, *Antient Metaphysics*, London, 1784 [repr. New York, 1977], I, p. II).

The ancients explained the ascent to the Supreme Mind in the following way: “They began with that lowest Mind, or Motive Principle, which is in all physical bodies, unorganized as well as organized. From thence they proceeded to the Motive Principle in the vegetable and the animal; and from the animal or sensitive Nature, they ascended to the rational and intellectual Nature of man; and, by studying this, the divine part, in our nature, they attained, as far as human capacity could attain, to the knowledge of what is most exalted in the universe, and at the top of the pyramid. Thus, proceeding regularly through Physics, and never losing sight of Mind, they came, at last, in the natural order of things, to metaphysics and that part of it which is the summit of philosophy, and of all human knowledge, I mean Theology”. This is the framework of explanation that Monboddo intends to reintroduce, with renewed contents. Indeed, experimental philosophy, which made so much progress in the modern age, can be understood as “the history of nature”, namely, the discipline that “by great attention, and minute observation, investigates facts which escape the vulgar [...]” (I, pp. III–V).

Towards the end of the century, the interest in Greek philosophical culture – which, as we have seen, pervaded many aspects of historiographical work in Britain – took the form of an actual history of Greek philosophy by Walter Anderson: *The Philosophy of Ancient Greece Investigated in its Origin and Progress, to the Areas of its Greatest Celebrity in the Ionian, Italic, and Athenian Schools: with Remarks on the Delineated Systems of their Founders; Some Accounts of their Lives and Characters, and those of their most Eminent Disciples* (Edinburgh, 1791). In the ‘Preface’, while asserting that his intention is not to rival Stanley, since this might seem “partial or invidious”, the author nevertheless expresses the following judgement on the work of his predecessor: “The frigidity of the bare details is, often, relieved by the interspersed observations. Where the principle or tenets are impious, or of immoral tendency, they undergo more particular discussions” (p. VI). From its very beginning, Anderson’s treatment reveals that it is greatly influenced by the ideas prevailing in the culture of his time: “Philosophy, therefore, taken in a proper sense, may be concluded to have had its origin in the more social and civilized conditions of mankind; and in judging of the pretensions of nations to acquaintance with the common arts of life, or any of the speculative sciences, in priority of time to others, it may be presumed, in general, that the claim of those amongst them ought to be preferred, those political establishments had precedence, and whose governments were so fixed, as to afford room and encouragement to inventions and discoveries, either useful to the community, or entertaining to the minds of men, when they enjoyed from it protection and tranquillity” (p. 2).

The anthropological approach to explaining the origins of philosophy is therefore applied more specifically to the situation in primitive Greece. While mentioning the Oriental origin of Greek philosophical culture, Anderson points out that the Greeks could neither cultivate nor take interest in any of the liberal arts as long as they were concerned about their physical survival. In order to understand the progress made by Greek philosophy, he proposes the following subdivisions: (i) “the fabulous or

poetic age”, in which theology covers the whole range of philosophical problems; (ii) “the age of the wise men”, in which philosophy becomes separate from theology and religion and advances separately; (iii) the time when philosophical schools arise, in which teachers have pupils but do not originate separate sects; (iv) the period in which philosophical studies are profoundly cultivated in all their aspects and according to a rigorous method; (v) finally, when philosophy is accurately subdivided into various sectors, which are taught in the Athenian schools under general names or under the name of their founder (this custom was to give rise to the sects with their opposing doctrines).

First of all, it is beyond doubt that, in ancient Greece, there were “poets” or “bards” teaching a sort of “mythological philosophy”. This was a philosophy oriented towards the fundamental problems of humanity but expressed by means of “ingenious or agreeable fables, in measured sentence or verse”. It consisted of sacred hymns and prayers. Even after the introduction of prose, versification continued to be very important because it better conveyed the “supernatural expression” pervading the accounts of the origin of the world and the principles of things. The aim was to awaken the imagination of that part of the public which was less educated and not used to meditation. Indeed, mythologies were an appropriate means for the dissemination religious and moral education. Greek poets invented a huge number of myths, and when their imagination was exhausted they took them from other peoples, the Magi, the Persians, the Africans, and the Celts. It is difficult to ascertain what philosophical principles and doctrines were contained in these accounts. It seems, however, that the poets were not greatly concerned with the “rationality or consistency” of their theophanies. To tell the truth, these tales were often a mix of philosophy, poetry, and religion.

In this section of the work, particular emphasis is placed on Homer, who “cannot be granted to have philosophised in this mystical manner, his pretensions to a name in another kind of philosophy, the value of which signalises him more than that imposed on him by fantastic commentators, may well be admitted. The wonderful capacity and penetration of his mind enabled him either to form to himself, or to embrace the most distinct and just ideas of human actions and characters [ . . . ], and to mark them in his works with the accuracy of a philosopher, and the liveliness of a poet [ . . . ]”. These aspects are so important that philosophers often debated whether he would have been a Platonist or a Peripatetic, an Epicurean or a Stoic. Naturally, a more critical analysis induces the author to conclude: “the poetical, or Homeric, theology ought to be thrown aside, as containing nothing, but what is opposite to every rational conception of deity, and even to any common notion of beings, of moral nature, superior to men” (pp. 13–14). In any case, the feature common to all these primitive mythologies is the generation of the world either from Chaos or from Earth and Water; they were, however, cosmogonies which involved a beginning of the world itself, since they regarded the eternity of generation as inconceivable.

The age of the “wise men” is mostly shrouded in legend, in such a way that it is impossible either to make a list of them or to determine their number with certainty. The name of Pythagoras is also shrouded in legend, but some aspects of his teaching can still be sufficiently clarified, starting with the Pythagorean method:

"The communication of knowledge to his elevés, in three several ways, by plain speaking, by concealing, and by signifying, was a further proof how much he adhered to the manner of instruction he had learned abroad" (p. 51). As for the famous doctrine of the *ipse dixit*, Anderson explains the correct way in which, in his view, it must be understood: it could not be an authoritarian approach directed to his closest disciples, but only an appeal to the authority of the principles used to terminate the idle discussions taking place among the wider public. Hence, for Anderson, the *ipse dixit* represented merely "the properest remedy against vague and fallacious argumentation, and generally the best termination of their reasoning, to appeal to some noted axiom, or acknowledged principle, in the doctrine of their master" (pp. 58–59).

In reconstructing the thought of the pre-Socratics, Anderson often follows Aristotle's judgement, since he considers him to be "an able judge". The figure of Socrates is outlined in detail as regards his physical aspect, his nature, his way of reasoning and, above all, his moral doctrine, "in which man was viewed as a single person, or as standing in a paternal relation to a family, or as connected with a public, or large community" (p. 162). Anderson insists on asserting the social and political character of Socrates's moral doctrines: "Socrates took his illustrations of various moral duties and precepts from the rules observed by men in the practice of the common as well as the moral liberal arts of life [. . .]" (p. 173).

In presenting Plato too, Anderson attempts to outline a biography which is satisfying and, above all, suited to the greatness of the philosopher. But this is no easy task, because "the histories of their lives [of the philosophers], detached from the survey of their philosophical opinions, have been generally patched up, with frivolous narratives or, at most, decorated with rehearsals of their wise sentences, often erroneously appropriated to individuals amongst them". Only since speculative principles began to represent the main subject of philosophical investigation, has it become possible to provide curious readers with details of the lives of philosophers coherent with their doctrines (p. 227). Plato's thought – and then Aristotle's – is presented in great detail in all its aspects. As regards Aristotle in particular, Anderson discusses the nature of the syllogism thoroughly, right from the beginning, coming to the conclusion that "the strenuous endeavour to render it [*sc.* syllogism] what it could not be made, either a system altogether complete in itself, or an *organon* perfective, in a high degree of science, is a convincing proof of the incompetency of both these aims, and especially of the latter" (p. 347). Indeed, what Aristotle was not able to obtain from the syllogism was not obtained by his followers either. According to Anderson, Aristotle did not manage to work out a consistent system in the field of ethics either, and hence the latest British moralists, like Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, "have borrowed their illustrations of moral virtue from Plato as a more eminent, and purer fountain" (p. 395).

Epicurus's thought is also extensively treated, but here on account of the many similarities it shares with the moral philosophy of "common sense". Indeed, the entire account has a largely theoretical character: "In concluding the remarks upon Epicurus's ethical theory, it may be observed, in general, that it coincides more with the selfish than the benevolent scheme of morals"; yet, for Anderson, "self-love"

and “benevolence” are not incompatible, so that, after numerous discussions, it is possible to hold a conjunction of the two principles in the form of a “sympathetic affection”. Thus understood, the moral principles of “self-love” and “benevolence” reveal themselves to be much closer to those of Epicurus, who always considered virtue “under the predicaments of being agreeable perceptions to ourselves and others, and likewise as utilities of the same import” (p. 512). Anderson is undoubtedly less interested in the philosophy of the Stoics, against whom he formulates the traditional accusation of atheistic Spinozism.

In his rather informal conclusion, Anderson gives some explanation of his narrative method: “the successions of the celebrated Grecian schools have been, in their order, brought into view; and the theories and reasoning of the philosophers, respecting the most important objects of the human understanding, have been traced. Their various speculations about the constitutions and state of the ablest of them with one another may well be considered as a proof, that the faculties of man are adapted to investigate the arduous subject, only in an imperfect and partial manner” (pp. 577–78). In any case, Anderson was not a philosopher but a historian,<sup>3</sup> who had established close contacts with Hume and had come to the history of philosophy through his profound interest in classical culture.

The historian and classicist John Gillies (1747–1836)<sup>4</sup> was another typical representative of Scottish culture, in whose works history, classicism, and philosophy are always closely connected. Indeed, he replaced William Robertson as a historian at court after his death in 1793, and he was to be particularly remembered as the author of a work which became very popular, both in England and in the rest of Europe, as confirmed by its numerous editions and translations into French, German, and Italian. This is *The History of Ancient Greece, its Colonies and Conquests; from the Earliest Accounts till the Division of the Macedonian Empire in the East, including the History of Literature, Philosophy, and the Fine Arts*, whose first edition in two volumes appeared in 1786, in which Robertson intends “to unite the history of arts with that of empire, and to combine with the external revolutions of war and government, the intellectual improvements of men, and the ever-varying picture of human opinions and manners”, precisely because “by the Greeks and only by them alone, literature, philosophy, and the fine arts, were treated as important concerns of state, and employed as powerful engines of policy” (*The History of Ancient Greece* [...], London, 1790, vol. I, ‘Preface’, p. vi). Gillies devotes several pages to describing the main doctrines developed by the most outstanding philosophers, even though he often limits himself to repeating uncritically the common-places which were widespread in contemporary historiography, as he does in some of

<sup>3</sup>He is also the author of *The History of Croesus King of Lydia* (Edinburgh, 1755) and *The History of France, during the Reigns of Francis II and Charles IX* (London, 1769).

<sup>4</sup>Among John Gillies’s works, in addition to his translations of Aristotle, let us mention the *Defence of the Study of Classical Literature* (an early essay published in a review) and the *History of the World* (London, 1807).



his judgements on Plato and Aristotle.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, what is noteworthy in his historiographical method is precisely the close connection established – from the point of view of his narrative too – between the historical and political facts and the philosophical doctrines, in the belief that the former can be better explained with the help of the latter. As a classicist, he strove to defend classical culture, notably Aristotle’s philosophy, from the criticisms raised by Stewart, and he translated and commented on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Politics*, and *Rhetoric*.

In the same period, the works of Plato, Aristotle, and the Neoplatonists found another great translator and commentator in Thomas Taylor (1758–1835). Taylor indeed translated not only a large part of the works of Plato and many Neoplatonists, but also Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (1801), *Rhetoric*, *Poetics*, *History of Animals*, and *Nicomachean Ethics*. It was precisely his translation of the latter that induced Taylor to engage in a polemic with Gillies himself (Th. Taylor, *An Answer to Dr. Gillies’s Supplement to his New Analysis of Aristotle’s Works; in which the Unfaithfulness of his Translation of Aristotle’s Ethics is Unfolded*, London, 1804). In the strictly philological field – despite his explicit Platonic and Neoplatonic tendencies – Taylor devoted himself to a wide-ranging critical revision of Aristotle’s works. In his extensive *Dissertation on the Philosophy of Aristotle, in Four Books* (London, 1812), besides describing the chief doctrines of the Greek philosopher, he set himself the task of demonstrating that “the writings of Aristotle have never been properly studied, and consequently that [...] his philosophy has not been [...] genuinely understood, since the destruction of the school of the philosophers [...]” (p. 389). Indeed, Taylor’s philological presentation of Aristotle still contains many traditionally misleading aspects of interpretation, such as the conviction that there exists a substantial coincidence between Aristotle and Plato’s thought, or a polemical admiration for classical as opposed to modern philosophy.

Taylor’s extensive translations and accounts of ancient philosophy undertaken at the very beginning of the nineteenth century represent a first systematic attempt to supply English-speaking scholars with the works of the major Greek philosophers in all their vastness. While he was indeed acknowledged to have filled a wide gap in English culture, however his work was immediately deemed to be unsatisfactory for several reasons, and it became the object of strong criticism. Let us mention in particular the radically negative judgement that James Mill (1773–1836), a pupil of Bentham and the father of the more famous John Stuart Mill, included in his presentation of Taylor’s translation of the five volumes of Plato’s works. Initially, in 1804, Mill admitted that “the mysterious and visionary speculations of the latter Platonists have been very generally considered as the genuine philosophy of Plato” (*The Literary Journal*, VIII, 1804, pp. 449–461); but a few years later he spoke of the translator in extremely virulent terms: “he has not translated Plato; he has travestied him in the most cruel and abominable manner [...], he has not elucidated, but covered him over with impenetrable darkness” (*The Edinburgh Review*, XXIV,

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<sup>5</sup>The parts dealing with the history of philosophy are included in the following volumes: vol. II, pp. 261–273 (chiefly Anaxagoras and Socrates); vol. IV, pp. 246–47 (the Socratic schools), 262–282 (Plato); Vol. v, pp. 267–307 (Aristotle, up to p. 270, and the Hellenistic schools).

April 1809, p. 190). Mill's main accusation is that Taylor did not possess so much as "a tincture of modern science" and he therefore presented the Platonic doctrines exclusively in light of the "ridiculous reveries of the later Platonists" and through the eyes of the "visionaries of the Alexandrian School". Indeed, Mill considers the Platonists of the Alexandrian School, especially Proclus, to be mere "charlatans of antient philosophy", whose doctrines cannot teach anything to modern thought precisely because they are nothing but "a gross mixture of the allegorical genius of oriental theology, with quibbling genius of the worst kind of Grecian metaphysics, and an audacious spirit of mystical, irrational and unintelligible fancy-hunting" (pp. 192–193). In reality, it was precisely these aspects of Taylor's philosophical activity which profoundly influenced several exponents of the English Romantic movement, as is clearly shown by the influence of his Neoplatonic "visions" upon William Blake's poetry and Shelley's literary and philosophical works. The scientific philosophical tradition which the contribution of ancient philosophy had helped to instigate, in Scotland above all, was thus wavering, while in the rest of the contemporary English-speaking world a rigorous philological and historical interest in ancient thought was still lacking.

Finally, it is worth mentioning John Ogilvie's work, *The Theology of Plato compared with the Principles of Oriental and Grecian Philosophers* (London, 1793), whose historical account served to create a comparison – by now increasingly needful – between the philosophical and theological doctrines of the Greek thinkers and Oriental, and particularly Indian, doctrines. There is no doubt that by the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, Plato and Aristotle's classical thought was at the centre of the renewal of historical and philological studies, and also represented an essential component of the British philosophical mentality developing in those years, even though several philosophers of "common sense" continued to express strongly negative judgements on many aspects of ancient philosophy, and of Aristotle in particular.

(c) *The history of man and the origins of language*

Speaking of the plan of his philosophical poem *An Essay on Man* (1732), intended to revive Bacon's project of describing "some pieces on human life and manners" in poetic form, Alexander Pope declared that he had limited himself to "considering man in the abstract, his nature and his state [...]". In his view, "the science of human nature is, like all other sciences, reduced to a few clear points: there are not many certain truths in this world [...]. It is therefore in the anatomy of the mind as in that of the body; more good will accrue to mankind as by attending to the large, open, and perceptible parts, than by studying too much such finer nerves and vessels, the conformations and uses of which will for ever escape our observation [...]". And he concludes by saying that his work will necessarily become "a general map of man, marking out no more than the greater parts, their extent, their limits, and their connexion [...]". Yet, adopting a prophetic tone, he immediately adds: "I am here only opening the fountains, and clearing the passage [...] To deduce the rivers, to follow them in their course, and to observe their effects, may be a task more agreeable" (A. Pope, *Select Poems*, Milan, 1919, pp. 176–177).

We know that, in his philosophical poem, in order to formulate a complete conception of man (seen in his relations with the universe, himself, society, and the moral world) Pope sought the valuable assistance of his friend, the philosopher Bolingbroke. The primary and most natural development of man proposed by Pope and Bolingbroke is to be found in the ethical doctrines. This conception – summarized in Bolingbroke's famous motto "history is philosophy teaching by examples" – led above all to the study of history with the object of documenting and strengthening the ethical behaviour proper to human nature (Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History* (London, 1757), p. 28; cf. G.H. Nadel, 'New Light on Bolingbroke's *Letters on History*', *J. Hist. Ideas*, XXIII, 1952, pp. 550–557). But there were at least two other important ways in which the study of man and his history were decisive in the philosophical and scientific culture of the eighteenth century: their concern with the anthropological and naturalistic problem of the position of man within the animal world, and the cognitive problem of the nature of human knowledge.

Eighteenth-century naturalists were increasingly discovering the "great chain of being" to which man belonged, according to a conception which has often, mistakenly, been considered as pre-evolutionary. As a consequence not only of the fact that more and more primitive peoples were being discovered and studies were being conducted on wolf-children and the famous *fille sauvage* in Europe itself, but also thanks to the careful comparative analysis of newly discovered animal species (such as the orang-utan), naturalists were induced to view man as the last link in the long chain of the animal world in which differences between one link and the next were gradually disappearing. The consequences of this in the moral, social, and philosophical fields were evident.

As for the cognitive problem, Locke's philosophy, with its hostility towards ideas and its alleged reduction of every cognitive fact to a sensation, initiated an entire literature centred around the comparison between the cognitive powers of brute animals and those of man. Pope's prophetic wish that we might achieve an "anatomy of the human mind" similar to that of the body was now being fulfilled but, in many respects, had detrimental effects for man himself – or at least this was the opinion held by the supporters of a religious and metaphysical vision of man. Indeed, it was with Hume that the "anatomy of the human mind" was to achieve important results, though these were to be such as to destroy not only the last remnants of the metaphysical conception of man, but also, as many believed, any moral and religious distinction from other animals. Undoubtedly, however, the "anatomy of the human mind" accomplished by Hume provided the tools necessary for placing man within a progressive picture of society and its powers, which was the object of the naturalists and the experts in political and social systems, but also of the Enlightenment historians and philosophers. Indeed, after Hume, all of them, whether they agreed with his conclusions or not, turned to the various histories (of man, society, peoples, or new lands) to find the compelling examples they needed to support their "Enlightenment" conception of the world.

Hume's plan is well-known, but it may be of use to recall the special role he gives to the study of human nature: "'Tis evident, that all the sciences have a relation,

greater or less, to human nature [...]. Even *Mathematics*, *Natural Philosophy*, and *Natural religion*, are in some measure dependent on the science of MAN; since they lie under the cognizance of men, and are judg'd of by their powers and faculties [...]. If therefore the sciences of Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, and Natural religion, have such a dependence on the knowledge of man, what may be expected in the other sciences, whose connexion with human nature is more close and intimate? The sole end of logic is to explain the principles and operations of our reasoning faculty, and the nature of our ideas: Morals and criticism regard our tastes and sentiments: And politics consider men as united in society, and dependent on each other. In these four sciences of *Logic*, *Morals*, *Criticism*, and *Politics*, is comprehended almost every thing, which it can any way import us to be acquainted with, or which can tend either to the improvement or ornament of the human mind [...]. There is no question of importance, whose decision is not compriz'd in the science of man; and there is none, which can be decided with any certainty, before we become acquainted with that science [...]. The science of man is the only solid foundation for the other sciences" (Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, p. 4, §§ 4–7). Similarly, for Hume, "Mankind are so much the same in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular [...] its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles of human nature, by showing men in all varieties of circumstances and situations, and furnishing us with materials from which we may form our observations and become acquainted with the regular springs of human action and behaviour" (D. Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding and Other Writings*, ed. St. Buckle, Cambridge, 2007, p. 76).

Here we are undoubtedly faced with a twofold need: on the one hand, as we have seen, historians ask philosophy to present the principles governing human life, so that they may acquire more certainty in orienting their historical research, even in those cases in which documents are limited or even totally absent (speculative tendency); on the other, scholars also tend to use historical proof in the realm of philosophy, with the aim of determining the uniformity of human nature (experimental tendency). After the radical shift in eighteenth-century culture brought about by Hume, Scottish thinkers, from Smith to Ferguson,<sup>6</sup> Kames, Monboddo, Reid, and Stewart, seem to assume that the primary purpose of philosophy – both experimental and speculative – and of history – both civil and the history of the different disciplines (or rather, using a single expression dating from this period, of "philosophical history", which unites speculative and empirical needs

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<sup>6</sup>See A. Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Teddington: Echo Library, 2007). But his methodology seems to be contrary to that of 'conjectural history': "In every other instance, however, the natural historian thinks himself obliged to collect facts, not to offer conjectures" (p. 7); "We are often tempted into these boundless regions of ignorance and of conjecture, by a fancy which delights in creating rather than in merely retaining the forms which are presented before it; we are the dupes of subtlety, which promises to supply every defect of our knowledge, and, by filling up a few blanks in the story of nature, pretends to conduct our apprehension nearer to the source of existence" (p. 9).

on a methodological level) – is that of explaining the process by which humanity has attained the high level of civilization that characterizes it, or else to know human nature in its original structure. Scottish thinkers frequently contested Hume, both because of the method he followed and for several of the conclusions he reached; but they did not hesitate to make the philosophy of man or of the human mind the primary object of speculative philosophy and empirical research. This philosophical assumption found its most natural manifestation, among others but more specifically, in the elaboration of a history of man as such. A project of this kind is at the root of the extensive research into the history of man carried out by Kames and Monboddo and the study of the origins and formation of language by Smith and Monboddo again.

In his *Sketches of the History of Man*, Kames discusses the twofold tendency – the speculative and the experimental approach – as well as the close connection uniting them in the study of man, as follows: “we have two means for discovering truth and acquiring knowledge, viz. intuition and reasoning. By intuition we discover subjects and their attributes, passions, internal action and in short every thing that is matter of fact [...], by intuition we also discover several relations [...], there are some facts and many relations, that cannot be discovered by a single act of intuition, but require several such acts linked together in a chain of reasoning” (H. Home [= Lord Kames], *Sketches of the History of Man*, London, 1796, III, p. 159). The blend of “intuition” and “reasoning” is particular to the “historical composition”, which is always “a relation of interesting facts connected with their motives and consequences”. Clearly, for Kames, “a history of that kind is truly a chain of causes and effects” (H. Home (I, p. 192). In his *Historical Law Tracts*, he again makes this clear: “We must be satisfied with collecting the facts and circumstances as they may be gathered from the laws of different countries: and if these put together make a regular chain of causes and effects, we may rationally conclude, that the progress has been the same among all nations, in the capital circumstances at least; for accidents, or the singular nature of people, or of government, will always produce some peculiarities” (H. Home [= Lord Kames], *Historical Law Tracts*, Edinburgh, 1758, pp. 25–269). Indeed, his history of man has the purpose of describing the progress made by the various nations in the various fields of study, from the degeneration of Babel up to the attainment of maturity. Although races became differentiated after the division of Babel, they shared a common human nature. His inquiry, therefore, is aimed at demonstrating how this common nature has enabled all peoples to progress, at a faster or slower pace, towards common goals of civilization, even though different conditions have engendered great disparities between the peoples and the disciplines themselves.

Pursuing his goal of reviving Plato and Aristotle’s ancient metaphysics, in order to oppose the empirically and sceptically oriented tendencies that Locke and especially Hume had introduced into British philosophy, Monboddo uses the history of man and his capabilities to support profound metaphysical concepts. He explicitly justifies this association as follows: “Philosophy, whether of man or of nature, must arise from facts, I have begun this philosophy of man with his history, whereof the facts here collected are the result of enquiries that I have been carrying on for more

than twenty years. During which time I have been studying history, not so much with a view to the history of any particular nation, as of the whole species; and as the first stage of the progression of man is not the subject of what is commonly called *history*, I have been at great pains to collect facts concerning that state from travellers both dead and living and to compare them with the facts related by ancient authors; and I find such a wonderful conformity betwixt them as I have observed in many instances, that I have as little doubt of that part of the history of man" (J. Burnett [= Lord Monboddo], *Antient Metaphysics*, London, 1784 [repr. New York, 1977], IV, p. 5).

His plan to oppose the "materialism" of the French and English philosophers of the time is not limited to contrasting the great metaphysical systems of the past with what he calls "the destruction of certainty", but also implies confuting the results obtained by the materialist philosophers precisely on their preferred ground, the empirical level of collecting data: "whoever [...] would trace human nature up to its source, must study very diligently the manners of barbarous nations, instead of forming theories of *man* from what he observes among civilized nations. Whether we can, in that way, trace man up to what I suppose his original state to have been, may perhaps be doubted; but it is certain we can come very near it [...]" (J. Burnett [= Lord Monboddo], *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, Edinburgh, 1773–1792 [repr. Hildesheim, 1974], I, p. 133). Monboddo radically objects to Hume and the empiricist philosophers, whom he accuses of "apriorism", for "it is impossible that the philosophy of man can be understood without first knowing his history [...] the greatest and noblest of the historical kind, and which lays the foundations of the philosophy of man, and also is of great importance in theology [...]" According to his conception, the history of man, "the noblest kind of history", "constitutes the foundation of the philosophy of man" and is the premise necessary for elaborating a theological doctrine which is rationally valid (J. Burnett, *Antient Metaphysics*, IV, p. 11).

This inquiry into the progress which led the human species to the highest stages of civilization is joined by particular research into the origins and development of language. Language, as an expression of human rationality, represents the most appropriate means for determining the specific character of human cognitive powers in comparison with those of brute animals. Adam Smith, in a short discourse included in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (pp. 9–13: Lecture 3<sup>d</sup>, Nov. 1762),<sup>7</sup> asserts that language originated in order to satisfy the needs of the first human beings: "two savages, who had never been taught to speak, but had been bred up remote from the societies of men, would naturally begin to form that language by which they would endeavour to make their mutual wants intelligible

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<sup>7</sup>A more elaborate version of this lecture was published in *The Philological Miscellany* (London, 1761), under the title *Considerations concerning the First Formation of Languages, and the Different Genius of Original and Compounded Languages*. The essay was then repeatedly published in the appendix to the *Lectures*. I am quoting from the critical edition of the *Lectures* edited by J.C. Bryce (Oxford, 1983).

to each other, by uttering certain sounds, whenever they meant to denote certain objects. Those objects only which were most familiar to them, and which they had most frequent occasion to mention, would have particular names assigned them” (*Considerations*, p. 203, § 1).

According to Smith, it would seem that the assignment of proper names (“names for things”) and the use of impersonal verbs formed the structure of the “primitive jargon”, from which – through analogy, analysis, comparison, and above all abstraction – language progressed towards greater complexity and perfection. According to the method proper to “philosophical history”, Smith merges empirical observation or analysis of historical languages with more general conclusions of a theoretical character concerning human nature, like the following: “This way of speaking, which the grammarians call an *Antonomasia*, and which is still extremely common, though now not at all necessary, demonstrate how much mankind are naturally disposed to give to one object the name of any other, which nearly resembles it, and thus to denominate a multitude, by what originally was intended to express an individual [ . . . ]”. In Smith’s view, this gave rise to the more general classification of objects into genus and species (p. 204, § 1). Just as spoken language first began as a simple structure, in which each particular event was expressed by a word, and then events and things were gradually divided into their elementary components, to which sounds were assigned, so the written word underwent a similar evolution. In the beginning, the entire word was represented by a single graphic symbol, but the impossibility of remembering an almost unlimited number of written characters induced man to invent written signs to represent the separate sounds of the word. The written word thus became more complex and difficult, but it allowed man to represent all the words by remembering only a few characters (p. 218, § 30).

Monboddo intended the six vast volumes of his *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* to be no less than a continuation of the “history and philosophy of man” to which he had devoted his *Antient Metaphysics*: “One of the noblest studies of man is the history of philosophy of man. Now I hold it to be impossible to know perfectly what man is, without knowing the nature of that art, the foundation of civil and political life, and of all other arts and sciences without which, man must have remained in brute state, in which we know some men were in ancient times and in which some are still to be found. It is chiefly by means of language that man is so far recovered from his fallen state, as to be an intellectual creature, not only capable of intellect, but in the actual possession of it; for that man is fallen from a higher state, I hold to be a truth of philosophy, as well as of religion, and will shew it to be so, if I shall live to finish the great work I have begun *The History and Philosophy of Man*” (*Of the Origin*, IV, “Preface”, pp. 7–8).

In the first volume of his extensive work, when describing the origins of language, Monboddo thoroughly opposes what he calls Smith’s “ingenuous conjecture”, namely, the idea that the first words invented by man were names of things: “if by *words* are meant what are commonly called *parts of speech*, no words at all were first invented; but the first articulate sounds that were formed denoted whole sentences; and those sentences expressed some appetite, desire, or inclination,

relating either to the individual, or to the common business which I suppose must have been carrying on by a herd of savages, before language was invented" (I, p. 395). According to Monboddo, language originated with inarticulate sounds, and then refined itself in societies which were already established and somehow civilized. He maintains therefore that, in order to invent language, "men should previously have formed ideas to be expressed by language; for it is impossible to conceive a language of proper names only without general terms [...]. Now, ideas must have been formed by an animal, such as man, carrying on any common business, and operating, not by instinct, but learning by observation and experience [...] such an animal must have an idea of the end for which he acts, and of the means for attaining that end" (I, p. 302). This engenders the need to define the origin of human language within the context of increasingly complex social relationships and to follow its evolution in parallel with the development of the various human arts, whose history Monboddo outlines. A considerable part of volume IV is devoted in particular to the language of philosophy, ancient philosophy above all. In Monboddo's view, this is the only possible way to understand and explain the huge complexity of languages in highly civilized countries.

(d) *At the origins of the "history of ideas": from the classification of the sciences to the free commerce of ideas*

After Bacon's utopian proposals and the precise methodologies introduced by Locke with the purpose of establishing a general classification of knowledge, it was the task of late-seventeenth-century and early-eighteenth-century lexicographers to produce the first concrete examples of those universal encyclopaedias which were the pride of the French and English Enlightenment. Among the several dictionaries produced in this period, Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia: or, an Universal Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences* (London, 1728) comprises the most mature example not only on account of its thoroughness and size but also, and above all, because of the originality of its structure. Indeed, both the authors of the French *Encyclopédie* and those of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* were to be deeply indebted to this work. In the 'Preface' (*Cyclopaedia*, pp. I–XXX) Chambers sowed the philosophical seeds which were to find the most fertile soil in the Enlightenment culture of the United Kingdom towards the end of the century. In reality, the starting point for Chambers' reflections became an obligatory reference for Scottish Enlightenment speculation as well: "to consider knowledge in its principles, and even pursue it up to its cause, and shew how it exists there, before it be knowledge; and to trace the progress of the mind thro' the whole, and the order of the modifications induced by it. This is a desideratum, hitherto scarce attempted [...]. 'Tis the Basis of all learning in general; the great, but obscure hinge, on which the whole encyclopaedia turns" ('Preface', pp. IV–V).

Chambers was clearly unable to fill this gap with a dissertation in the field of theoretical philosophy (which, instead, was to become the task of the inquiries conducted by the Scottish Enlightenment thinkers), but he was able to provide an adequate empirical example. It was, then, precisely by assembling and collecting in the proper way all that which has been hitherto discovered, learnt, and thought



by man, that it becomes possible to identify the origins, relations, and causes of our knowledge: "when numbers of things are thrown precariously together, we sometimes discover relations among them, we should never have thought of looking for [...]. 'Tis certain most of our knowledge is empirical, the result of accident, occasion, and casual experiment [...] but very little we owe to dogmatizing and method; which, as already observ'd, are posterior matters, and only come in play after the game is started" (p. XXIX). As Mamiani observes, "the randomness of knowledge is thus paradoxically planned, it becomes part of a project, the encyclopaedia, which has no longer the primary function of ordering an amount of learning which is stable and seen as definitely acquired; on the contrary, it brings about precariousness, which becomes a synonym of opportunity, innovation, and discovery" (Mamiani, *La mappa del sapere*, p. 34).

The compiler thus has a dual role: on one hand, he can be compared to the raven in Aesop's fable, which embellishes itself with the feathers from other birds, but on the other, in a more praiseworthy light, he can be seen as a bee carefully selecting the flowers from which it draws honey. In either case, it is certain that this work of assembly implies the possibility of having had "a particular regard both in the choice of the several heads, and in dwelling or amplifying upon them, to extending our views, dilating our knowledge, opening new tracks, new scents, new vistas". Indubitably, "such a variety of views, principles, and manners of thinking, is a sure remedy against being too violently attached to any one; and is the best way of preventing the making of pedants, bigots, etc. of any kind". Chambers makes it clear that "we have endeavour'd not only to furnish the mind, but to enlarge it and make it in some measure co-extend with the dimensions of all minds, in all ages and places, and under all situations and circumstances as a language, in some measure, makes our senses do". It is precisely in formulating these statements that the lexicographer becomes a philosopher, since here he does not limit himself to gathering and classifying cultural data, but sees the main task of his work as expanding knowledge towards new horizons. Just as language is capable of extending human experience beyond any material limit, so the encyclopaedic collection widens almost to infinity the possibility of new intellectual experiences (*Cyclopaedia*, 'Preface', pp. XXIX–XXX).

It is by virtue of the particular nature of human knowledge thus understood ("ideas are transient things and seldom stay long enough with us to do us either much good, or harm": p. XXX)<sup>8</sup> that Chambers proclaims the right for everyone to appropriate the achievements of others: "'Tis idle to pretend any things of property in things of this nature. To offer a thing to the publick, and yet to pretend a right reserved therein to one's self, if it be not absurd, yet it is sordid. The words we speak, nay, the breath we emit, are not more vague and common than our thoughts, when divulged in print. You may as well prohibit people to use the light that shines in their eyes, because it comes from your candle" (p. XXIX). He therefore

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<sup>8</sup>Similarly, A.O. Lovejoy affirms (without naming the source): "ideas are the most migratory things in the world"; cf. 'Reflections on the History of Ideas', *J. Hist. Ideas*, I (1940), p. 4.

announces the establishment of a great “commonwealth of learning” which it is the task of the encyclopaedia to make concretely possible by gathering vast amounts of experimental and historical material, so that the philosopher’s mind may be formed in a way which is adequate to embrace human knowledge as a whole.

The combination of different ideas is the basis for generating new ideas. In the ‘Preface’ to the second edition, when referring to the techniques used for combining the elements in Boyle’s chemistry, Chambers compares intellectual activity to that of a pharmacist: “it is the various assemblage of simple ideas, denoted by common words, that makes all the variety of terms; as it is of simples in an apothecary’s shop, that makes the variety of his medicines. The analogy goes farther; and it may be said terms, like medicines, only differ from each other as their ingredients ideas, and the relations thereof differ” (*Cyclopaedia* [1738<sup>2</sup>], p. xv). Just as one cannot ask the pharmacist for an exhaustive definition of the simple elements, which the concern of another discipline, so the lexicographer as such cannot normally engage in analysing the simplest ideas, a task properly assigned to the philosopher. Of course, a mere collection of data, like that produced by the lexicographer, does not constitute a philosophy: “mere physics, as such, do not make a philosophy” (*Cyclopaedia*, 1728, ‘Preface’, p. xvii). The task of philosophy as such is, on the one hand, to grasp “the nexus or chain whereby things are held together, and in virtue whereof we proceed from things known to things unknown” and, on the other, to indicate their relation to our present situation, because “the bare acquisition of the ideas is no real advantage, unless they be such as to have some relations to our selves, and are in some sense adequate, and adapted to the circumstances of our wants, and occasions, or capable of being made so”. In the process of shaping the philosophical mind, we have to turn to the history of philosophy and of human thought: “the school philosophy, however, is of some further use, as matter of history. We learn by it how people have thought, what have obtain’d, and in what various manners the same thing has been conceiv’d [...] the history of human thoughts is no doubt valuable of all others; ‘t being this alone that can make the basis of a just logic” (pp. xxvii–xxviii).

As it is known, the path that Chambers opened up to eighteenth-century culture was to come to its glorious fulfilment only in France. In practice, in spite of Chambers’ decisive beginning, English culture was thereafter always to imitate and follow the French cultural tendencies. This is clearly evident in the case of two great works of scholarship which appeared in the United Kingdom during the eighteenth century: the *Biographia Britannica* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. The *Biographia Britannica*, whose first edition in six volumes was edited by Andrew Kippis, appeared in the years 1747–1766; although addressing the problem of a new method, the *Biographia Britannica* finally found a model in Bayle’s *Dictionnaire*, which it explicitly imitated: “[...] it was in order to collect into one Body, without any restriction of time or place, profession or condition, the memoirs of such of our countrymen as have been eminent and by their performances of any kind deserve to be remembered [...]. In this situation, the first thing to be considered was method and in respect to this we were determined to that of Bayle, not from a blind and superstitious regard to the veneration the learned world have for his memory and high esteem they profess for his excellent performance in this way, but because it

appeared to us the most natural, easy and comprehensive, the best adapted to our purpose and the most likely to give our readers satisfaction and not at all the worse for his having invented, used and thereby recommended in to the approbation of the learned” (*Biographia Britannica, or the Lives of the Most Eminent Persons who Have Flourished in Great Britain and Ireland from the Earliest Ages to the Present Times: Collected from the Best Authorities, Printed and Manuscript and Digested in the Manner of Mr. Bayle’s Historical and Critical Dictionary*, ed. A. Kippis, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1778–1793 [repr. Hildesheim and New York, 1974], p. x). This work was to become dominant in the English-speaking regions because of its subject matter as well as its accuracy, if not for the originality of its design.

Subsequently, the events determining the origin and success of the famous *Encyclopaedia Britannica* are testimony to how much eighteenth-century French culture dominated every aspect of learned literature in Scotland around the middle of the century. The first edition of the *Encyclopaedia* dates from 1768, and was edited by Colin Macfarquhar, Adam Bell, and William Smellie. Initially, the proponents of this far-reaching project seemed to want almost exclusively to undertake well-paid editorial work, following the polemics and interest aroused in that period by the French *Encyclopédie* in the English-speaking countries. Only after the fourth edition was the need felt to address the theoretical problems entailed by any form of encyclopaedic knowledge. Archibald Constable therefore engaged a number of scholars whose task was to write special dissertations to be published as supplements to the fourth edition. In this, Constable was guided by his friend Dugald Stewart, who suggested the idea of requesting four extensive introductory discourses in order to draw up a map of knowledge similar to that outlined by D’Alembert. This was the origin not only of Stewart’s *Dissertation* on philosophical doctrines – which we will later examine in detail – but also of the text by John Leslie and John Playfair on mathematics and physics, that by William Thomas Brande on chemistry (a discipline which had recently made great progress and which demanded a separate treatment), and, finally the dissertation by James Mackintosh on ethical and political doctrines, which was meant to complete the treatment elaborated by Stewart himself.<sup>9</sup>

(e) *From the “philosophical history” of knowledge to the “theoretical history” of ideas*

This survey, though embracing only a few of the various aspects of mid-eighteenth century English culture, has revealed a common line of development. The great variety of literary output during this fervent period allows us to distinguish a feature peculiar to English culture which matured, from the perspective of the

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<sup>9</sup>*Dissertation Exhibiting a General View of the Progress of Mathematical and Physical Science*, ed. by J. Leslie, who initiated it, and J. Playfair, who brought it to completion (Edinburgh, 1816); *Dissertation Third: Exhibiting a General View of the Progress of Chemical Philosophy, from the Early Ages to the End of the 18th century*, ed. W.Th. Brande, (London, 1817); *Dissertation on the Progress of Ethical Philosophy, chiefly during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. J. Mackintosh (Edinburgh, 1830).

historiography of philosophy as well, during the late eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century. Within English-speaking countries, experts like the historian, the erudite scholar, the lexicographer, the anthropologist, the linguist, the jurist, and the specialist in politics, for example, all began, in different ways, to provide 'philosophical' explanations for the facts they examined; in other words, there was a widespread belief that, in order to be such, every explanation must constitute a reasoned connection to what precedes and what follows the fact to be explained, within the context of the cognitive system commonly shared in a certain period.

The person who explicitly formulated this historiographical method was Dugald Stewart who, referring to the examples provided by Smith and others, spoke of the "philosophical history" – or rather "conjectural history" – of the different spheres of knowledge, naturally including philosophy. Precisely because "in Mr Smith's writings, whatever be the nature of his subject, he seldom misses an opportunity of indulging his curiosity, in tracing from the principles of human nature, or from the circumstances of society, the origin of the opinions and the institutions which he describes" (Stewart, *Account of* [...] *A. Smith*, p. 295, § 52), Stewart could not fail to point out the peculiarity of the methodology used in Smith's writings. The intention is first of all to become aware of the great progress made by man through the centuries, and then to seek a satisfactory explanation or reason why this progress took place: "when, [...] we compare our intellectual acquirements, our opinions, manners, and institutions, with those which prevail among rude tribes, it cannot fail to occur to us an interesting question, by what gradual steps the transition has been made from the first simple efforts of uncultivated nature, to a state of things so wonderfully artificial and complicated. Whence has arisen that systematical beauty which we admire in the structure of a cultivated language [...] ? Whence the origin of the different sciences and of the different arts; to their last and most refined improvements? Whence the astonishing fabric of the political union [...] ? [...] On most of these subjects very little information is to be expected from history; for long before that stage of society when men begin to think of recording their transactions, many of the most important steps of their progress have been made" (p. 292, § 45).

It was precisely in this particular historical environment that the new methodology proved to be useful and even indispensable: "in this want of direct evidence, we are under a necessity of supplying the place of fact by conjecture; and when we are unable to ascertain how men have actually conducted themselves upon particular occasions, of considering in what manner they are likely to have proceeded, from the principles of their nature, and the circumstances of their external situation [...]. Nor are such theoretical views of human affairs subservient merely to the gratification of curiosity. In examining the history of mankind, as well as in examining the phenomena of the material world, when we cannot trace the process by which an event *has been* produced, it is often of importance to be able to show how it *may have been* produced by natural causes. Thus, in the instance which has suggested these remarks, although it is impossible to determine with certainty what the steps were by which any particular language was formed, yet if we can shew, from the known principles of human nature, how all its various parts might gradually have

arisen, the mind is not only to a certain degree satisfied, but a check is given to that indolent philosophy, which refers to a miracle, whatever appearances, both in the natural and moral worlds, it is unable to explain" (p. 293, §§ 47–48).

This is the type of philosophical inquiry that Stewart defines as *theoretical history* or *conjectural history*, terms intended to give a new connotation to the historical methodology elaborated by the Scottish thinkers, while preserving the several existing connections with the *histoire philosophique* practised by the French. Indeed, Stewart explicitly acknowledges many French authors (for example Montesquieu or Montucla's *Histoire des Mathématiques*) as the initiators and disseminators of this type of history. But, in his view, the examples that he identifies among the British authors are much more significant because they are enlightened by extensive research into human nature – and the 'philosophy of mind' in particular, initiated by Hume, which he believed found its most mature expression with the Scottish thinkers during the last decades of the eighteenth century.

Nevertheless, in the strictly philosophical field, after Smith's clarifying examples, almost none of the major Scottish "common sense" thinkers had engaged in a purely historical reconstruction of the philosophical doctrines. This fact is probably not to be ascribed to a simple lack of interest in the history of philosophical thought as such, but to the particular situation characterizing British philosophy at the time. After the radical shift in Scottish thought engendered by Hume, with all the controversy and dissension that ensued, the thinkers of the second half of the eighteenth century were totally absorbed with pursuing Hume's ideas, while avoiding what was, or seemed to be, unacceptable from the religious and metaphysical viewpoint. It was only towards the end of the century that this project seem to be consolidated.

Of course, the philosophy of the past greatly influenced almost all Scottish thinkers after Hume too, but in these cases ancient and modern philosophical doctrines had a primarily theoretical function. Historical awareness was almost totally absent or reduced to mere literary or dialectical refinement. In practice, scholarly works such as dictionaries and encyclopaedias simply cited passages from the major philosophers, with no specific guideline and no explicit historiographical design. For example, the famous *Philosophical Dictionary, or The Opinions of Modern Philosophers on Metaphysical, Moral, and Political Subjects* by Franz Xaver Swediauer (London, 1786, 4 vols) was nothing more than a collection of passages drawn from the most famous philosophers. However, it is clear that within the wide-ranging speculative interests of post-Hume Scottish reflection there were clear historiographical tendencies towards the philosophy of the past. The person who was to give an exemplary expression of these tendencies was Dugald Stewart. Stewart represents a mature and consolidated philosophy, while possessing at the same time a wide-ranging historical culture relating to earlier philosophy. Indeed, Stewart not only made great use of the philosophers of the past in his theoretical works, but also devoted specific discussions to some of them, developing comparisons based on the speculative awareness he had gained, which allowed him to gauge the differences and similarities of contemporary thought with that of the past.

Stewart's *Dissertation* brings together the most mature aspects of the 'philosophy of mind' in a perceptive and careful balance with the features and methods peculiar to historical treatment. As he himself declares, this is a 'theoretical history' of philosophy, not only because the events characterizing philosophy through the centuries lack linearity and sequentiality, but above all because the doctrines proposed by the different thinkers often appear to be internally disjointed and for the most part inadequately interrelated. In 'theoretical history', the conjectural or theoretical aspects do not become evident through an arbitrary modification of the historical data but thanks to a proper speculative reconstruction of the philosophical problems and their evolution. It is precisely this endeavour that displays philosophical history in all its validity and effectiveness. The particular process that the historian of philosophy must follow in this perspective is so singular that the encyclopaedia though representing the primary cultural model for Scottish Enlightenment scholars, was to prove inadequate for the task. In order to create a history of philosophy not as erudite scholars but as philosophers, it is necessary to possess a 'discriminating eye' which can only come from the possession of a sound 'philosophy of mind'. Furthermore, it is necessary to continually carry out a 'nice process' of selection, analysis, and criticism of the various philosophical systems that followed one another. It is only by resolving the many incorrect doctrines into their fundamental components that it is possible to discern and select the valuable parts from the misleading ones, just as in mining it is necessary to smelt complex amalgams of iron to obtain pure metal.

In Stewart, we therefore again encounter that 'chemical' image of ideas and knowledge to which Chambers had explicitly referred and which had probably become widespread in eighteenth-century English culture since its use by Locke, appropriately reinterpreted and viewed in the perspective of the Enlightenment.<sup>10</sup> But, unlike Chambers, Stewart speaks as a philosopher and not as a lexicographer with philosophical interests, and views the method of analysing and separating the unsolved philosophical problems into parts as the best way to distinguish true philosophy from false. Naturally, this task no longer involves the random association of different ideas which Chambers had formulated, but can only be carried out by the mature philosopher who, precisely by virtue of his maturity, is equally aware that it is impossible to draw rigidly defined boundaries between disciplines and valid limits of research.

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<sup>10</sup>Let us recall the well-known analogy that A.O. Lovejoy uses in the preface to his most famous work between the "history of ideas" and analytic chemistry (*The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, Harvard, 1936, p. 4). About a century earlier, with the same purpose and in the framework of a coherent historiographical conception similar to the theory of the "history of ideas", Dugald Stewart saw a close resemblance between the "philosophical history" of philosophy and mining. Nevertheless, none of the historical and methodological discussions written by Lovejoy make any mention of the historiographical method adopted by A. Smith, D. Stewart, or other eighteenth-century writers, not even when these writers are abundantly cited in other respects. Further, the only hint at Stewart's "theoretical history" that appears in the official review of the historians of ideas contained in the essay by J. Romein, 'Theoretical History', *J. Hist. Ideas*, IX (1948), pp. 55–56; but Stewart's methodology is not mentioned in this case either.

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## 7.1 Adam Smith (1723–1790)

### *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*

**7.1.1** The founder of modern economic science was born in Kirkcaldy on 5th June, 1723. He was active academically at the universities of Edinburgh – where he taught rhetoric and jurisprudence (1758–1751) and was a member of the Philosophical

Society, the Select Society, and the Royal Society (of which he was a founding member in 1783) – and Glasgow, where he held the chair of logic (1751) and moral philosophy (from 1752), as well as various other academic posts until 1763. In London, he held several political offices and acted as councillor. Between 1764 and 1766 he travelled in France and Switzerland as the private tutor to Henry Scott, third Duke of Buccleuch. In Geneva he met Voltaire and in Paris he joined the circle of *philosophes* and frequented the salon of Mme de Boufflers. He died in Panmure on 17th June, 1790.

**7.1.2** In addition to his famous work *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), Adam Smith produced a number of other works which largely appeared posthumously and are now available in their entirety in the six volumes of the edition published under the auspices of the University of Glasgow (Oxford, 1976 ff.): *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie eds (1976); *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, W.P.D. Wightman and J.C. Bryce eds, with Dugald Stewart's *Account of Adam Smith*, ed. I.S. Ross (1980); *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, ed. J.C. Bryce (1983); *Lectures on Jurisprudence; The Correspondence of Adam Smith*, E.C. Mossner and I.S. Ross eds (1977). The *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* comprise a number of texts pertaining to the history of philosophical and scientific thought: the *History of Astronomy* (full title: *The Principles which lead and direct Philosophical Inquiries; illustrated by the History of Astronomy*), the *History of Ancient Physics*, and the *History of Ancient Logic and Metaphysics* (pp. 31–105; 106–117; 118–129).

**7.1.3** As we have observed, Adam Smith's interest in the history of philosophy is documented from the very first years of his cultural activity. Indeed, besides his essay on *Taste, Composition and History of Philosophy*, Smith's letters mention other writings on this topic. In a letter written to the Duke of Rochefoucauld in 1785, Adam Smith announced that he had “two other great works upon the anvil”, one of which was “a sort of Philosophical History of all the different branches of Literature, of Philosophy, Poetry and Eloquence”. The material was already “in a great measure collected” and partly “put into tolerable good order”, but although he struggled against “the indolence of old age” (he was 62 at the time), it was extremely uncertain whether he would be able to finish either work (*The Correspondence*, pp. 286–287). In another letter, addressed to Hume, Smith probably refers to the same project, or to a part of it, as a “juvenile work”.<sup>11</sup> Almost certainly, this is the “History of Philosophy” Robertson was asking about in the letter quoted above (see above, p. 390), implying that the work had been started or even promised long before. All this attests to Smith's early and profound interest in the historical problems arising

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<sup>11</sup> *The Correspondence*, p. 168: “As I have left the care of all my literary papers to you, I must tell you that except those which I carry along with me there are none worth the publishing, but a fragment of a great work which contains a history of the Astronomical Systems that were successively in fashion down to the time of Des Cartes. Whether that might not be published as a fragment of an intended juvenile work, I leave entirely to your judgement [ . . . ]” (letter of 16th April, 1773).

in the realm of philosophy, which he was not able to discuss adequately in his major works. Yet, even in these works – for example in his *Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* – we cannot fail to notice statements in which he seems to indicate the need to systematize “the great phaenomena of nature” from a historical viewpoint too, phaenomena which, “as they necessarily excite the wonder, so they naturally call forth the curiosity of mankind to inquire into their causes”<sup>12</sup>; and references to the history of education in medieval universities or to the subdivision of philosophical learning in ancient Greece.

In Smith’s conception, the three essays – or rather essayistic fragments – devoted respectively to the *History of Astronomy*, the *History of Ancient Physics*, and the *History of Ancient Logic and Metaphysics* represent a demonstration of the “principles which lead and direct philosophical inquiries”. This indeed is precisely the full title that accompanies these three “histories”, and the sense in which they are to be understood is clarified in the first three sections of the *History of Astronomy*, sections which are not concerned with the history of astronomy as such but are devoted to a more general philosophical and linguistic analysis. In the introduction and first two sections, Smith examines in detail the meaning of the following terms: ‘Wonder’, ‘Unexpectedness’, ‘Surprise’, and ‘Admiration’. He makes it clear that, although they may appear similar, these terms designate different feelings in man, and hence they perform different roles within human knowledge. Accordingly, ‘Unexpectedness’ and ‘Surprise’, whether they be good or bad, arouse in man the “most violent and convulsive emotions” and cause loss of composure, insanity, and even death. By contrast, ‘Wonder’ is the source of deep satisfaction for the mind because it consists essentially in the feeling of fluctuation and uncertainty that characterizes our imagination and memory when we have to arrange or place the objects of reality according to a clearly ordered classification (*Hist. Astron.*, I.2 and II. 3).

When an object, or a series of objects, or events relating to the objects cannot be adequately explained within our conceptual system, then we have Wonder, and our imagination intervenes to fill in the empty spaces and create bridges between apparently unconnected facts; in practice, it seeks to fill in the gap which appears on a cognitive level: “[...] the supposition of a chain of intermediate, though invisible, events, which succeed each other in a train similar to that in which the imagination has been accustomed to move, and which link together those two disjointed appearances, is the only means by which the imagination can fill up this interval, is the only bridge which, if one may say so, can smooth its passage from the one object to the other” (II. 8).

‘Wonder’ thus vanishes, and imagination flows smoothly and gently over the objects, which we now view as related and connected by a real or imagined chain of explanation. Imagination always needs a chain, a bridge for “[...] passing along two events which follow one another in an uncommon order” (II. 11). Smith admits that excessive effort in seeking these connections may lead to extravagance and

<sup>12</sup> A. Smith, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, R.H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner eds, textual ed. W.B. Todd (Oxford, 1976), v.i.f. 24; see also v.i.f. 19–31; v.i.f. 23.

insanity, especially in old age, but this is precisely the essence of intellectual activity. This is also the main task of philosophers, “[...] who often look for a chain of invisible objects to join together two events that occur in an order familiar to all the world [...]”. Philosophy can thus be defined as “the science of the connecting principles of nature”. In particular, “philosophy, by representing the invisible chains which bind together all these disjointed objects, endeavours to introduce order into this chaos of jarring and discordant appearances, to allay this tumult of the imagination, and to restore it, when it surveys the great revolutions of the universe, to that tone of tranquillity and composure, which is both most agreeable in itself, and most suitable to its nature [...]” (II. 10–12).

According to his conception, “Philosophy, therefore, may be regarded as one of those arts which address themselves to the imagination; and whose theory and history, upon that account, fall properly within the circumference of our subject”. For this reason, Smith integrates his *History of Astronomy* with a very brief survey of the development of philosophy from its origin up to the height of its perfection. Philosophy, he writes, is “the most sublime of all the agreeable arts, and its revolutions have been the greatest, the most frequent, and the most distinguished of all those that have happened in the literary world. Its history, therefore, must, upon all accounts, be the most entertaining and the most instructive”. He states that he has incorporated a brief history of philosophy into the *History of Astronomy* not in order to test the absurdity or probability, the agreement or disagreement of the ancient systems with truth and reality, but exclusively with a view to documenting how much those systems “are fitted to sooth the imagination, and to render the theatre of nature a more coherent, and therefore a more magnificent spectacle, than otherwise it would have appeared to be”. This is, he believes, “the clew that is most capable of conducting us through all the labyrinths of *philosophical history*: for, in the mean time, it will serve to confirm what has gone before, and to throw light upon what is to come after” (II. 12).

The third section is entirely devoted to an analysis of the principles which regulate the historical survey of the origin and development of philosophy. Indeed, according to Smith, philosophy arose in an attempt to “find out those hidden chains of events which bind together the seemingly disjointed appearances of nature” (III. 1). Man as a savage, uniquely concerned with the problem of survival in his daily struggle against the adverse forces of nature, did not feel the need to work out an explanation of phenomena, which could provide a link between them. Only when the living conditions began to improve, then some individuals, “whose attention is not much occupied either with business or with pleasure, can fill up the void of their imagination, which is thus disengaged from the ordinary affairs of life, no other way than by attending to that train of events which passes around them”. While they consider natural phenomena, on one hand their imagination is delighted in perceiving the regularities of nature; on the other, however, these natural phenomena apparently present inconsistencies which arouse their wonder and “seem to require some chain of intermediate events, which, by connecting them with something that has gone before, may thus render the whole course of the universe consistent and of a piece” (III. 3).

On the basis of this reconstruction, Smith was able to conclude that “‘Wonder’ [...] and not any expectation of advantage from its discoveries, is the first principle which prompts mankind to the study of Philosophy, of that science which pretends to lay open the concealed connections that unite the various appearances of nature; and they pursue this study for its own sake, as an original pleasure or good in itself, without regarding its tendency to procure them the means of many other pleasures” (III. 3). This is the reason why the first thinkers were from those Greek colonies that had reached a considerable level of economic prosperity and a high status among civil societies. Smith believed that, in these colonies, the early thinkers started to formulate explanations of phenomena, but rarely went so far as to elaborate coherent systems, or at least, that part of their thought that has come down to us does not enable us to determine these systems with any plausibility. It is only from the school of Socrates, with Plato and Aristotle, that “Philosophy first received that form, which introduced her, if one may so, to the general acquaintance of the world”. Hence, Smith says: “It is from them [Plato and Aristotle] therefore, that we shall begin to give her history in any detail [...] whatever was valuable in the former systems, which was at all consistent with their general principles, they seem to have consolidated into their own” (III. 5–6).

### 7.1.4 *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*

**7.1.4.1** Here we will consider three *Essays*: the *History of Astronomy*, the *History of Ancient Physics*, and the *History of Ancient Logic and Metaphysics*. While the first appears to be sufficiently elaborate (with the exception of the section on Newton) and extensive (it consists of 91 pages, with copious notes), the other two are but short fragments of about 15 pages each, still in draft form. When the *Essays* were first published in 1795, the editors Joseph Black and James Hutton thought that all the essays included formed part of Smith’s juvenile plan to write a “connected history of the liberal sciences and elegant arts” (*Essays*, p. 32). By contrast, Dugald Stewart repeatedly indicated only the three essays cited above, as well as the *Considerations Concerning the First Formation of Languages*, as the most perfect examples given by Smith of the way in which “philosophical history” should be written.<sup>13</sup> It seems legitimate, therefore, to consider these three essays as preparatory drafts towards the fulfilment of his project. On the other hand, contrary to what the first editors believed, it is rather more difficult to include in the same project another philosophical essay, *Of the External Senses*, where the idea of “conjectural history” is totally absent. The *Essays on Philosophical Subjects* also comprise other pieces on literature – not easily relatable to the philosophical essays – as well as the new

<sup>13</sup> Stewart, *Dissertation* [...] (Edinburgh and London, 1854), p. 4: “Of this sort of *conjectural* or *theoretical* history, the most unexceptionable specimens which have yet appeared are indisputably the fragments in Mr. Smith’s posthumous work on the *History of Astronomy* and on that of the *Ancient Systems of Physics and Metaphysics*”; Id., *Account of* [...] A. Smith, pp. 292–293.

edition of the letter written by Smith to the *Edinburgh Review* in 1756, and published therein in the same year, in which Smith discusses the theories recently published by Rousseau in his *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755).

**7.1.4.2** Since these are fragmentary writings, we cannot suppose that Smith intentionally adopted a division into periods. Nevertheless, these texts contain at least a few quite clear suppositions about the origin of philosophical thought and its probable conclusive systemization. According to Smith, a history of philosophy, understood in its proper sense, can only start with Plato and Aristotle, because only in the thought of these two philosophers is it possible to find a complete and coherent system of explanation. For Smith, each new system replaces the preceding one, upon proving itself to be “an imaginary machine” that functions more efficiently. He does not credit any particular age, taken as such, therefore, with the merit of having refined philosophical explanations. However, he also certainly believed that, after the great systems elaborated in Antiquity, the most significant efforts to extend the coherence of our explanations are to be found at the birth of modern thought in the seventeenth century. He seems to invest the Newtonian system with a particular role and goes so far as to depart from his own epistemological conception in order to conform to it: if on one hand Newton’s system is just a new “conjecture” which simply works better than the rest, on the other, many factors lead us to believe that it is the conclusive systemization of physical and celestial phenomena.

**7.1.4.3** It is only in the fourth and final section of the *History of Astronomy* that Smith presents the outline of a history of astronomy. In the other two fragments, we find the outline of a history of ancient physics, logic, and metaphysics. The presentation of a number of essential features in the history of these disciplines is a practical opportunity to show how it is possible to apply to specific doctrines that model of explanation which, for Smith, should be used in the historical reconstruction of any discipline: a model involving a rational concatenation of facts, systems, and doctrines. The history of astronomy represents one of the most significant examples of this connecting chain precisely because “of all the phaenomena of nature, the celestial appearances are, by their greatness and beauty, the most universal objects of the curiosity of mankind” (*Hist. Astron.*, IV. 1). Smith reviews the various astronomical systems which have enabled mankind to explain celestial phenomena. He starts by describing the system of concentric spheres, which “though rude and artificial, it is capable of connecting together, in the imagination, the grandest and the most seemingly disjointed appearances in the heavens”. Smith concludes his presentation of this system by stating that if there had been no other celestial bodies in the heavens to discover besides the sun, the moon, and the fixed stars, then “this old hypothesis might have stood the examination of all ages, and have gone down triumphant to the remotest posterity” (IV. 4). But the complexity of the celestial phenomena observed by man induced the astronomers to modify their connecting chains. For example, the fact that planets were sometimes observed to advance, sometimes to withdraw, and sometimes again to stand still “is contrary to all the

natural propensities of the imagination, which accompanies with ease and delight any regular and orderly motion, but feels itself perpetually stopped and interrupted, when it endeavours to attend to one so desultory and uncertain” (IV. 7).

Smith then dwells on a detailed description of the changes that occur in the imagination when it tries to explain facts apparently so contrary to its nature. In such cases, the imagination is “turned violently out of its natural career”, hence “the fancy feels a want of connection, a gap or interval, which it cannot fill up, but by supposing some chain of intermediate events to join them”. This “chain” is composed of the various hypotheses advanced by astronomers. These hypotheses – albeit often in a complex manner – present the motions of planets as being constant and uniform, that “imagination could easily attend to and pursue, and which connected together that otherwise incoherent diversity of movements observable in the Sphere of the Planet” (IV. 7). The system of eccentric spheres represents precisely the attempt, albeit in a rather more complex way, to prevent those difficulties which cannot reasonably be solved within the system of concentric spheres. Smith does not limit himself to describing the function performed on a cognitive level by the system of concentric and eccentric spheres, but also seeks to compare these two systems with that of the Stoics and to explain why the latter “seems never to have the vogue”. He writes that “the system of Concentric as well as that of Eccentric Spheres gives some sort of reason, both for the constancy and equability of the motion of the Fixed Stars, and for the variety and uncertainty of that of the Planets. Each of them bestow some sort of coherence upon those apparently disjointed phaenomena. But this other system seems to leave them pretty much as it found them”. Smith demonstrates this statement through an analysis of numerous specific occurrences and concludes that the “stoic system affords him [ . . . ] no principle of connection, by which he can join together, in his imagination, so great a number of harmonious revolutions” (IV. 15).

The discussion continues by looking at the transmission of these ancient doctrines to the Arabs, who contributed greatly to the development of ancient astronomy, without disrupting its foundations. With the Latin translation of the Arabic works, the Arabs provided the Scholastic philosophers with Aristotle’s philosophy and at the same time with Hipparchus’ astronomy, and they were “necessarily obliged to reconcile them to one another, and to connect together the revolutions of the Eccentric Circles and Epicycles of the one, by the solid Spheres of the other” (IV. 25). This is, in brief, the difficult and in some respects insoluble problem that the Western world seems to have inherited from the Greek thinkers and the Arab astronomers. Attempts to reconcile the two opposing tendencies were made by Peurbach, but with little success. Other corrections were introduced by Regiomontanus. But it was by now clear, concludes Smith, that “when you have convinced the world, that an established system ought to be corrected, it is not very difficult to persuade them that it should be destroyed” (IV. 27).

Yet this is exactly what Copernicus did. He started to envisage a different location for the celestial bodies by examining the ancient and obscure hypotheses which have come down to us from Antiquity, and finally proposed a new system: “the system of Copernicus afforded this easily, and like a more simple machine, without the assistance of Epicycles, connected together, by fewer movements, the complex

appearances of the heavens". But the beauty and simplicity of this new system were not enough to induce the imagination to accept it: "the novelty and unexpectedness of that view of nature, which it opened to the fancy, excited more wonder and surprise than the strangest of those appearances, which it had been invented to render natural and familiar, and these sentiments still more endeared it. For, though, it is the end of Philosophy, to allay that wonder, which either the unusual or seemingly disjointed appearances of nature excite, yet she never triumphs so much, as when, in order to connect together a few, in themselves, perhaps, inconsiderable objects, she has, if I may say so, created another constitution of things, more natural indeed, and such as the imagination can more easily attend to, but more new, more contrary to common opinion and expectation, than any of those appearances themselves" (IV. 33). For these reasons, when Copernicus' work was circulated, "it was almost universally disapproved of, by the learned as well as by the ignorant [...] the natural prejudices of sense, confirmed by education, prevailed too much with both, to allow them to give it a fair examination" (IV. 35).

After Copernicus, astronomy was open to the most revolutionary of innovations, not only with Tycho Brahe's "new hypothesis", which Smith describes at length, but above all with the discoveries of Galileo, who, proceeding "with reason and experience [...] did less violence to the usual habits of the imagination" (IV. 42–43) and solved the doubts and objections which had accumulated with regard to the Copernican system. In particular, Kepler, Gassendi, and Descartes "endeavoured to render familiar to the imagination, the greatest difficulty in the Copernican system, the rapid motion of the enormous bodies of the Planets". Smith explains: "when the fancy had thus been taught to conceive them as floating in an immense ocean of ether, it was quite agreeable to its usual habits to conceive, that they should follow the stream of this ocean, how rapid so ever" (IV. 65). Finally, Newton built a system that "corresponded to many other irregularities which Astronomers had observed in the Heavens [...] and whose parts are all more strictly connected together, than those of any other philosophical hypothesis" (IV. 68 and 76). Indeed, the principle of gravity upon which it relies is the most familiar to our senses and, at the same time, the most suitable to establish close connections between such different phenomena and situations.

In the two short fragments devoted to the history of ancient physics and the history of ancient logic and metaphysics, respectively, Smith applies his methodology to these disciplines as well. As regards physics, he observes that "if the objects, which were here presented to its view [*sc.* of natural philosophy], were inferior in greatness or beauty, and therefore less apt to attract the attention of the mind, they were more apt, when they came to be attended to, to embarrass and perplex it, by the variety of their species, and by the intricacy and seeming irregularity of the laws or orders of their succession [...] if the imagination, therefore, when it considered the appearances in the Heavens, was often perplexed, and driven out of its natural career, it would be much more exposed to the same embarrassment, when it directed its attention to the objects which the Earth presented to it, and when it endeavoured to trace their progress and successive revolutions". In order to help the imagination gain some understanding of the



apparent chaos of the elements, it was necessary to deduce all their qualities, operations, and laws of succession from a small number of principles. This could be achieved “by supposing, first, that all the strange objects of which it [nature] consisted were made up out of a few, with which the mind was extremely familiar: and secondly, that all their qualities, operations, and rules of succession, were no more than different diversifications of those to which it had long been accustomed, in these primary and elementary objects” (*History of Ancient Physics*, 1–2).

The doctrines elaborated by the early thinkers regarding the constitutive elements of reality satisfy these demands. Water, earth, air, and fire are constitutive elements of reality, since they can be found in almost all objects, and are at the same time familiar to the human mind. Admitting a few elementary principles of reality enabled early thinkers to “connect together most of the other tangible qualities of matter [. . .]. Their principles of union, indeed, were often such as had no real existence, and were always vague and undetermined in the highest degree; they were such, however, as might be expected in the beginnings of science, and such as, with all their imperfections, could enable mankind both to think and to talk, with more coherence, concerning those general subjects, than without them would have been capable of doing”. These were of course the initial attempts to discover that “chain which bound all her different parts to one another”, as opposed to the superstition and inconsistent explanation of natural phenomena that existed in earlier ages. But “as soon as the Universe was regarded as a complete machine, as a coherent system, governed by general laws, and directed to general ends, viz. its own preservation and prosperity, and that of all the species that are in it”, by analogy with the machines constructed by man, a search immediately began for the unitary principle that could be regarded as responsible for this huge machine. The physical systems proposed by the philosophers as “imaginary machines” met this requirement (*Hist. Anc. Phys.*, 8–9).

But if physics, or natural philosophy, has the task of determining the nature or essence of each particular species of things, in order to “connect together all the different changes that occur in the world”, then there are two other sciences which go beyond physics in explaining the universe: metaphysics and logic. The former “considered the general nature of Universals, and the different sorts or species into which they might be divided”; the latter, built on metaphysics, “endeavoured to ascertain the general rules by which we might distribute all particular objects into general classes, and determine to what class each individual object belonged” (*History of Ancient Logic and Metaphysics*, 1). Smith presents a few particular aspects of the metaphysical thought elaborated by Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics, obviously viewing them according to his own perspective, namely, to make it clear how even the most intricate and abstract systems can carry out the function of solving the problems of comprehension and coherence which confront the human mind when it tries to explain the essence of the outer world or the origin of our ideas.

**7.1.4.4** As we have repeatedly observed, Smith presents only a few *specimina* of what he believes should be the correct way of writing the history of philosophy and the sciences according to the method of “philosophical history”. Although

fragmentary, these essays undoubtedly provide a number of clear indications. The chief problem faced by the author of a “philosophical history” is “to connect together” (this term is used more than 85 times in the three texts examined). The disordered series of phenomena must first be coherently connected together, but more precisely, the causes must have a connection with the effects which is plausible enough to satisfy both the imagination and reason. That this act of connecting is not purely rational appears to be an assumption of considerable importance and modernity. Indeed, Smith explains the initial non- acceptance of the Copernican system – even though it was rationally much more plausible than the Ptolemaic system – by asserting that the new explanation disturbed the human imagination because it disrupted deep-rooted beliefs. The analogy with certain epistemological doctrines of our time concerning the nature of scientific paradigms is clear.

Equally ‘modern’ is Smith’s conviction that each system is destined to be replaced by a new system which succeeds where the previous one had failed. His concept of science appears to rule out the possibility of making definitive acquisitions and seems rather to imply that all acquisitions may be surpassed in the advancement of knowledge. Nevertheless, he seems to depart from this general assumption in the case of Newton: “his system [...] now prevails over all opposition, and has advanced to the acquisition of the most universal empire that was ever established in philosophy [...]. His principles, it must be acknowledged, have a degree of firmness and solidity that we should in vain look for in any other system. The most sceptical cannot avoid feeling this [...]. And even we, while we have been endeavouring to represent all philosophical systems as mere inventions of the imagination, to connect together the otherwise disjointed and discordant phaenomena of nature, have insensibly been drawn in, to make use of language expressing the connecting principles of this one, as if they were the real chains which Nature makes use of to bind together her several operations. Can we wonder then, that it should have gained the general and complete approbation of mankind, and that it should now be considered, not as an attempt to connect in the imagination the phaenomena of the Heavens, but as the greatest discovery that ever was made by man, the discovery of an immense chain of the most important and sublime truths, all closely connected together, by one capital fact, of the reality of which we have daily experience” (*Hist. Astron.*, IV. 76; Smith ascribes the opposition encountered by the Newtonian system in France as due exclusively to the predominance of Cartesian philosophy in the French mentality).

**7.1.5** Smith’s *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*, which also included Stewart’s account of the life of this great economist, were soon translated into French by Pierre Prévost. Prévost himself had already established a close friendship with Stewart and held him in great esteem, and he added a number of personal *Réflexions sur les oeuvres posthumes d’Adam Smith*, which describe Smith’s peculiar philosophy. This peculiarity was mainly due to the fact that Smith came from a different culture (“on peut être versé dans plusieurs branches de la philosophie et n’avoir de celle-ci qu’une idée fort imparfaite. La manière de la traiter et même de la définir varie d’un pays à l’autre”: *Essais philosophiques*, II, pp. 229–30), and to this end he

described the essential aspects of the three main philosophical schools of the time, the Scottish, the French, and the German. He was also aware that the fragmentary character of the work being presented might give rise to difficulties in understanding and to miscomprehension; indeed, just as “it is undoubtedly difficult to appreciate thoroughly the details of a painting whose totality we ignore”, so we cannot fully understand the works of the intellect if we are not able to grasp their overall meaning. To this end, Prévost outlines some aspects of the “philosophy of mind” within which Smith’s fragments are to be situated. These fragments undoubtedly acquire greater comprehensibility and relevance when integrated into the context of Smith’s speculation; yet they continue to possess the beauty and charm of the unfinished work. Smith’s work, however, only enjoyed a limited circulation in continental Europe, not only in the late eighteenth century but also in the following centuries. It was published repeatedly in Great Britain (with the only exception of the Basel edition of 1799, published in English as well), in the years 1811, 1822, 1869, and 1880. The influence of some of Smith’s considerations on a general history of the arts and sciences was apparent not only in the field of historiography but also in the philosophy of science. But this lies outside the scope of our present essay.

**7.1.6** On Smith’s life and works: J. Rae, *Life of Adam Smith* (London, 1895; repr. New York, 1965); W.R. Scott, *Adam Smith as Student and Professor* (Glasgow, 1937; repr. New York, 1965); E.C. Mossner, *Adam Smith, the Biographical Approach* (Glasgow, 1969); DECBPh, pp. 808–816; *The Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith*, ed. K. Haakonssen (Cambridge, 2006); *Elgar Companion to Adam Smith*, ed. J.T. Young (Cheltenham, 2009); *The Oxford Handbook of Adam Smith*, Chr.J. Berry, M. Paganelli, and C. Smith eds (Oxford, 2013).

On the various aspects of Smith’s historiographical ideas: S. Moscovici, ‘A propos de quelques travaux d’Adam Smith sur l’histoire et la philosophie des sciences’, *Revue d’histoire des sciences et de leurs applications*, IX (1956), pp. 1–20; A. Giuliani, ‘Le *Lectures on Rhetoric* di Adamo Smith’, *Riv. crit. Stor. Filos.*, XVII (1962), pp. 328–36; W.S. Howell, ‘Adam Smith’s *Lectures on Rhetoric*: An Historical Assessment’, *Speech Monographs*, XXXVI (1969), pp. 393–418; W.P.D. Wightman, ‘Adam Smith and the History of Ideas’, in *Essays on Adam Smith*, A.S. Skinner and Th. Wilson eds (Oxford, 1975), pp. 44–67; A.S. Skinner, ‘Adam Smith: an Economic Interpretation of History’, *ibid.*, pp. 154–78; Schneider, pp. 96 and 122; J. Alvey, ‘Adam Smith’s View of History: Consistent or Paradoxical?’, *History of the Human Sciences*, XVI (2003), 2, pp. 1–25; J. Evensky, *Adam Smith’s Moral Philosophy. A Historical and Contemporary Perspective on Markets, Law, Ethics, and Culture* (Cambridge, 2005); G. A. Pocock, ‘Adam Smith and History’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Adam Smith*, pp. 270–287; A. Cohen, ‘Philosophy and History. The Paradoxes of History’, in *The Routledge Companion to Eighteenth Century*, ed. A. Garrett (London and New York, 2014), pp. 753–772.

On the reception of the *Essays*: BB, II (1796), pp. 425–450; *Essais philosophiques par feu Adam Smith [...] précédés d’un précis de sa vie et de ses écrits*, par Dugald Stewart . . . , traduits de l’anglais par P. Prévost (Paris, 1797);

D. Schultess, 'L'école écossaise et la philosophie d'expression française: le rôle de Pierre Prévost', *Annales Benjamin Constant*, XVIII-XIX (1996), pp. 97–105; D.D. Raphael, "'The True Old Humean Philosophy'" and Its Influence on Adam Smith', in *David Hume. Bicentenary Papers*, ed. G.P. Morice (Edinburgh, 1977), pp. 23–28; C. Etchegaray, 'The Context of the Stewart-Prévost Correspondence', *History of European Ideas*, XXXVIII (2012), pp. 5–18; Id., 'The correspondence of Dugald Stewart, Pierre Prévost, and their Circle, 1794–1829', *ibid.*, pp. 19–73.

## 7.2 James Burnett (Lord Monboddo) (1714–1799)

### *Antient Metaphysics*

**7.2.1** James Burnett was born in Monboddo in Kinkardineshire, Scotland, in October 1714. Quite early in life, he moved to Edinburgh to study and then to Groningen, in the Netherlands, where he read law. During his youth, he showed a lively interest in ancient philosophy, a discipline he continued to pursue during his later professional life, in legal practice at the Faculty of Advocates and as a judge in the Court of Session. While living in London he formed numerous friendships, especially in literary and philosophical circles, and his correspondence with James Harris and William Jones in particular was to prove fruitful from a cultural point of view. Meanwhile, his sojourn in the Netherlands and his frequent business trips to France gave him the opportunity to learn the language and cultivate his interest in French culture.

In 1767 Monboddo was elected to the House of Lords, but the many duties this entails did not distract him from his dedication to the study of classical Greek philosophy. At the same time, he met the leading minds of the Scottish Enlightenment at the Edinburgh Select Society, among whom were Hume, Smith, Kames, Robertson, Stewart, and Price. His large correspondence attests to the wide-ranging exchange of ideas which linked him to the most outstanding figures of this movement. Although undeniably "peculiar" – as his biographers describe him – both in his private life (among other things, he advocated that everybody adopt the austere habits of the ancients) and in his philosophical positions (on several occasions disagreement arose with Hume, Kames, Johnson, and Smellie), Monboddo was certainly a typical representative of the great cultural renewal which met with enthusiasm in Scotland during the second half of the eighteenth century. He died in Edinburgh on 26th May, 1799, at the age of 85.

**7.2.2** Leaving aside several collections of laws and pronouncements in the House of Lords, his most famous works are *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, in six volumes, and *Antient Metaphysics*, also in six volumes. The dates of publication of the individual volumes of these two works overlap, demonstrating the close links between the two. The first volume of his *Of the Origin* was published in Edinburgh in 1773; the following volumes were to appear respectively in 1774, 1776, 1787, 1789, and the last in 1792 (reprint of the whole series: Hildesheim, 1974). The first

volume of *Antient Metaphysics* was printed in Edinburgh in 1779; the remaining volumes followed respectively in 1782, 1784, 1795, 1797, and 1799.

**7.2.3** Monboddo expanded the concepts of philosophy and the history of philosophy so as to embrace, on the one hand, ancient theurgic knowledge, previously reintroduced to the United Kingdom by the Cambridge Platonists and, on the other, recent geographical and ethnographical discoveries which were valued by the empiricist mentality that characterized seventeenth and eighteenth century British culture. Indeed, he explicitly sought a principle capable of uniting the two, apparently opposite, perspectives into one vast metaphysical philosophy. Certainly, for Monboddo, “metaphysics is a science so abstruse, and so remote from common apprehension, that even the subject of it is not easily understood by those who are not accustomed to abstract thinking” (*Antient Metaphysics*, I, p. 1); nevertheless, it remains the most essential and the easiest of all disciplines, once we properly understand its objectives. Indeed, few have properly understood that “the proper subject [...] of *metaphysics* is *mind*, *pure and separate from all matter*” (II, p. 5), and yet many claim they can give fundamental explanations of reality on a purely mechanistic level.

Metaphysical investigation holds the distinction between mind and matter in the universe to be fundamental, even though this distinction is posited for a merely speculative purpose, since there is no phenomenon or object in nature in which these two factors are distinctly separated: “*Mind* exists either by itself, or joined with *body*; for I differ so much in opinion from those philosophers, who think there is nothing else existing but *body*, that I hold there is not in the whole universe, as far as our knowledge extends, any *body* without *mind* [...]. *Mind*, therefore, according to the philosophy I have been taught, pervades the universe, mixes with, and informs every body in it, and produces all the various motions by which the system of nature is carried on” (I, p. 2). The intellectual path proposed by Monboddo to reach an understanding of this fundamental assumption – that the mind constitutes the real object of metaphysics – entails as a preliminary condition an in-depth analysis of Aristotle’s works on physics, where the Stagirite concerns himself with natural objects as composites of matter and form, the latter of which Monboddo terms ‘Mind’. Now, since the whole universe is composed of matter and mind, which are “wonderfully mixed together” (I, p. 7), and since this blend constitutes the basis for all movement and all change, the purpose of metaphysics has to be that of seeking the causal explanation of the perpetual change we encounter in earthly things as well as in those celestial motions of the cosmos which appear to be immutable and perfect. The metaphysician will thus arrive at the fundamental distinction between that which is moved – body – and that which moves – mind.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Monboddo ironically comments on the confusion between physics and metaphysics characterizing the philosophy of his time: “Those [...] who ridicule the noblest of all sciences, under the name of *metaphysics*, not only do not know the nature of the sciences, but appear to me not to understand even the title of Aristotle’s books which treat of it, but to imagine that it has some connection with we call in English *physics*” (*Ant. Metaph.*, I, p. 5).

This achievement, which is fundamentally a rethinking of Aristotelian metaphysical principles in the philosophical and scientific language of the time, undoubtedly has an apologetic intent. Monboddo cannot accept that contemporary thinkers base their speculation on a principle of reality which is almost exclusively material. Precisely in order to combat this tendency, which he regards as harmful on a philosophical and a religious level, Monboddo seeks to demonstrate the importance in metaphysics – and for contemporary culture too – of the ancient theistic system: “what I propose, in this work, is to revive antient theism, particularly the theism of Plato and Aristotle, which, like the greatest part of antient philosophy, is almost intirely lost in this age [...], the consequence of this is, that our modern philosophers, even such of them as are theists, make their system of nature much too mechanical; for they *physiologize* without mind; and, though they allow the mind was necessary at first to produce this universe [...], they think it may go on without mind, by the powers of matter and mechanism merely” (I, ‘Introduction’, p. 1).

Thus Monboddo embarks on the reformulation of theistic philosophy into a unitary system: “Modern theism may be divided into two kinds: the first is that of Des Cartes, the French philosopher. He admits the existence of an incorporeal deity altogether separated from matter, whom he makes the author of the universe, and all things in it, and bestows on him all those perfections of goodness, wisdom, and intelligence, which are commonly ascribed to him. This his theology; but his physiology is absolute materialism; for, rejecting all final causes, and so excluding intelligence and design from the system of the universe, he derives every thing from matter once set in motion by the deity, by which he accounts not only for the formation and motion of the celestial bodies, but the organization and successive generation of animals and plants [...]. The other system of modern theism is that of Sir Isaac Newton. His philosophy is not so comprehensive as the philosophy of Des Cartes; for he does not meddle with plants or animals here on earth, except that he has said, that sensation, and the spontaneous movements of animals, are produced by a *subtle spirit*” (I, p. 11). Newton is chiefly interested in stars and celestial bodies which, he believes, once set in motion by a superior power, continue to function exclusively by virtue of mechanical laws. Monboddo contrasts these conceptions adopted by the new theism with the doctrines of ancient theism, which invest the mind with a fundamental role not only at the very beginning of the universe, but also at each ensuing moment in the movement of this huge cosmic machine: “all bodies are moved by mind, either mediately or immediately, and therefore, when body is moved, and it cannot be shown to be moved by the impulse of another body, it must necessarily be supposed to be moved immediately and directly by mind [...], the consequence of this principle is, that, as the motions of animals, vegetables, and various other motions upon earth, cannot be accounted for from any material and mechanical cause, they must be supposed to be produced by mind” (I, pp. II–III).

Ancient theism had resolved this issue much more thoroughly than the new theisms were able to. Newton’s doctrines constitute not so much a general philosophy as a history of nature which is particularly useful because by means of the empirical inquiries carried out by the Newtonians it is possible to distinguish between the different types of mind operating in matter, and demonstrate that

the various motions and phenomena are nothing other than the product of these operations. It is the task of the metaphysician, however, to be able to grasp the mind in its true nature as separate from matter, and ascend through it to the theological knowledge of the Supreme Mind. The great task assigned to metaphysical speculation (philosophy) on one hand, and to empirical inquiry (history) on the other thus begins to take shape: to discover the ultimate cause of things through the study of nature and its numerous manifestations.

Monboddo briefly summarizes his concept of philosophy as follows: "I think I may say with truth, that, if there be such a thing as philosophy, and if it be not a mere sound without meaning, mind must be the subject of it [ . . . ] that mind is the subject of logic, morals, metaphysics, and theology, nobody will deny [ . . . ] this knowledge, when applied to nature, leads us necessarily to the study of final causes [ . . . ]. Now, the discovery of final causes is, in my opinion, not only the most useful and delightful part of natural philosophy, but the easiest; for it is much easier to discover why a thing is done in nature, than how it is done; and there are many men who have employed their whole lives in studying the mechanical means that nature employs to accomplish her purposes, who, after all, must confess, that the mechanism of nature is so minute and intricate, that it is not to be comprehended, at least by us, nor unravelled and dissected, like a machine of human invention" (II, p. 457).

Monboddo combines this dual – speculative and empirical – concern in his vast 'historical' inquiry, guided however by his philosophy, with the aim of demonstrating how, in its manifestations, all of nature rests upon an unalterable principle, mind. He then turns to the study of man who, precisely because he is endowed with an intellect superior to that of other beings, is undoubtedly placed "at the top of the scale of being" (III, p. 5). Monboddo's attention is obviously centred upon the history of man and the development of the intellectual element which is present in him. He is convinced that, in order to understand what man is and to provide him with a proper vision of the world, it is necessary to reconstruct his history, following the course that led him from the condition of a brute to that of a person who is rational, intelligent, and integrated in a complex society. Consulting all the documentation available, Monboddo traces the history of man in its intellectual manifestations using the methodology typical of conjectural history. This methodology proves to be particularly useful in his inquiry into the origin of language, a field in which it is almost impossible to carry out a historical reconstruction of the various moments in the rise of the faculty of language in man (see *Of the Origin*, I, p. 472). The belief that it is gradually possible, albeit through conjecture, to trace the earliest human manifestations on Earth and to reconstruct the missing links, completing the entire chain of being, induces Monboddo to combine history – the collecting of empirical data, notably that concerning man – together with philosophy. If by philosophy he means the search for the ultimate cause, namely mind, and by history he means the study of the manifestations of the mind in matter, then 'to practice the history of philosophy' means going over all the stages that have enabled man to fulfil his intellectual potential and rise high enough to develop a clear vision of a universe regulated by the Supreme Mind.

### 7.2.4 *Antient Metaphysics*

**7.2.4.1** *Antient Metaphysics* is a vast work in six volumes dealing with the universal principles and categories of reality (vol. I); the distinction between mind and body (vol. II); the nature of man (vol. III); the history of man (vols IV and V); and the divine nature (vol. VI). Monboddo's extensive treatment presents an explicit history of philosophy in the traditional sense only in the lengthy 'Preface' to vol. III (pp. I–LXXX). Of course, there are other parts of his works which can be viewed in a historiographical perspective, and his historiographical concept of philosophy is also outlined in vols IV and V of *Antient Metaphysics*, which are devoted to the *History of Man*.

**7.2.4.2** The subdivision of the development of philosophical thought into periods closely follows Monboddo's philosophical concept of the development of man's intellectual faculties. This is in general rather simple and, in some respects, even primitive: philosophy arose when early man abandoned nomadic life and started to settle in fixed shelters. The Egyptian civilization represents the richest period for philosophy, which was then to find its most complete theoretical expression in classical Greek speculation. After the poet-thinkers (Orpheus and Musaeus), the history of Greek philosophy can be divided into two parts: the first comprises Pythagoras and his school, the second embraces a broad period extending from Plato and Aristotle to the complete diffusion of their doctrines in the Greek world. Subsequently, philosophy underwent varied moments, at times losing its original sense, at other times, though rare, finding it again. But innovations only concern the empirical aspect on which metaphysical explanations are based, and not the ultimate sense of these explanations.

**7.2.4.3** In Monboddo's works, the historical account of the products of philosophical thought is clearly subordinate to his explicit theoretical assumptions. It follows that Monboddo is almost exclusively interested in the various manifestations of the mind in the history of man. Indeed, the mind, which as we have seen imbues every corporeal element, has a rather fascinating history if considered in relation to the particular animal that is man. For Monboddo, the vicissitudes of the mind represent what is properly called the history of philosophy. For this reason, the history of philosophy does nothing but document over time the development of the mind in man, who, thanks to the mind, can rise from the condition of the brute and build civil societies. The most appropriate medium through which we can follow this progress of the mind, above all in the remotest ages, is represented by the study of language. It is therefore necessary, in the first place, to conduct detailed research into the origins of language, so as to fully reconstruct the development of the intellectual activities of man and thereby, in a certain sense, the development of his philosophy: "It is chiefly by means of language that man is so far recovered from his fallen state, as to be an intellectual creature, not only capable of intellect, but in the actual possession of it; for, that man is fallen from a higher state, I hold to be a truth of



philosophy, as well as of religion, and will shew it to be so, if I shall live to finish the great work I have begun, the History and Philosophy of Man" (*Of the Origin*, IV, 'Preface', pp. 7–8).

The acquisition of a code of communication like speech necessarily places man on a higher level than the animal. In nature, the intermediate link between the brute and the *civis* is represented by the orang-utan, the name of which, according to Monboddo, literally means "the wild man of the woods". Thus, Monboddo saw in the orang-utan an image of primitive man before the use of speech.<sup>15</sup> In support of this theory, he presents the results of a number of studies carried out on savage children which, in his view, represent a source of information of extraordinary scientific interest. Indeed, on the basis of these studies, he establishes that the essential condition for the acquirement of language is social life: "by language I mean the expression of the conceptions of the mind by articulate sounds". This definition stresses that man is able to perform abstraction and that speech arises as a result of this capability: "that there can be no language without ideas, is evident; and it is as evident, that there can be no ideas without abstraction" (*Of the Origin*, I, pp. 5 and 349).

After establishing the various stages which led man to evolve from a quadruped into a biped, from a herbivore to a carnivore, hunter, and fisherman, Monboddo focuses on the emergence of agriculture. His argument is that the arts and sciences originated at the moment when man was freed from the needs imposed by the instinct for survival and could devote himself to the noble art of study. In his hunter/gatherer days, man was forced to roam continuously in search of new places where food could be found. But when, with the advent of agriculture, he turned from being nomadic to sedentary, he was able to remain in settlements and, together with other individuals, begin to establish an organized society.

The first example of a highly articulate society is to be found in ancient Egypt. According to Monboddo, the beginning of the history of human thought can be dated back to the Egyptian civilization, and hence it can be rightly considered as the cradle of all arts and sciences. "[...] whoever has studied the History of Man, must know that Arts and Sciences can never arise among a vagrant people, but only among a people living by agriculture in cities, that is in the closest society and most frequently intercourse [...] that Egypt is the native country of all Arts, Sciences, and Philosophy, and that from thence they have been derived to all the Nations, if not of Asia and Africa, at least of Europe, I hold to be a fact incontestable" (*Ant. Metaph.*, III, pp. III–IV).

Egyptian culture was subsequently transmitted to Greek thinkers. The Greeks did not elaborate any original philosophical system, as they later claimed, but rather drew knowledge from Egypt thanks to the poet thinkers like Orpheus and Musaeus.

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<sup>15</sup>Numerous scholars have viewed this doctrine as an anticipation of Darwin's theory of evolution. However Charles Darwin did not seem to know Monboddo's works and mentions only Buffon as his forerunner.

In particular, Orpheus elaborated a conception of the universe which had an animistic character, regulated by daemons or intelligences, so that even apparently inanimate things, such as magnetite and amber, were transfused by a Mind (III, p. X). In Monboddo's view, Orpheus was the greatest of these poet thinkers because he had sensed – albeit in a philosophically imprecise way and on the basis of a pagan conception – that the whole of creation is animated by intelligences and not governed by purely mechanical rules. After studying for 20 years in Egypt, Pythagoras settled in Croton, in Magna Graecia, where he founded a school. There, besides the mysteries of philosophy and the sciences, he taught the virtues of the political art needed to rule a country with rectitude. Pythagoras always shrouded himself and his school with an aura of mystery, probably inherited from Egyptian teachings: he “lived there like a god among men [...] and he was believed to be possessed with powers and faculties far surpassing common humanity” (III, pp. XX).

Monboddo does not dwell on the thinkers of the Ionic and Eleatic schools, judging them unworthy of consideration because their inquiries did not concern the presence of the divine mind in nature. He therefore turns directly to the study of philosophy in the Athenian circles and deals at length with Plato and Aristotle. He briefly dwells upon the figure of Socrates who, in his opinion, should be considered not so much a real philosopher as a “lover of philosophy”. Indeed, Socrates, although endowed with an inquiring mind, confined his research to moral philosophy, while despising universal philosophy, whose object is the nature of things and its principles. Socrates thus has a particular place in the history of philosophy, as his activity constitutes a preparation for philosophy: to arouse curiosity and the desire for knowledge in man, which are inclinations absolutely essential for a correct approach to philosophy.

Unlike Socrates, Plato formulated a much more wide-ranging and systematic philosophical system, and his chief doctrines – which investigate vices and virtues, the animal soul and the intellective soul, etc., and range over all fields of human learning – also demonstrated his extensive knowledge and considerable understanding. In addition, Monboddo identifies a number of specific analogies between Platonic and Christian thought: “As to Metaphysics and Theology, his philosophy was most sublime, and approaching near to the Christian Theology, particularly with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, which he no doubt learned, either in Egypt, or, I rather believe, in the orphic or pythagoric writings [...]. His doctrine of ideas too, I think, may be referred to his mystic philosophy [...].” He maintains the same with regard to moral philosophy: “even as to Moral, to which Socrates's philosophy [...] was entirely confined, Plato excelled him very far, for both he and Aristotle learned from the Pythagorean books, what [...] is the foundation of the whole human philosophy, viz. that there are two minds in man, the rational and the intellectual, and the irrational or animal” (III, pp. XXXI–XXXII).

Monboddo has no doubt that Plato learnt these philosophical doctrines from his study of certain Orphic or Pythagorean writings. He proposes the same theory with regard to Aristotle, whom he presents as a profound and resourceful philosophical genius, but also a receptive and eager reader of all the philosophical works which preceded him. Indeed, it is impossible for a single individual to have had the capacity

for such a great undertaking. And surely Aristotle also used Pythagorean sources as well. Following Gale, Monboddo thus seeks the origins of a number of distinctive Aristotelian doctrines, and he identifies the source of the doctrine of the eternity of the world and the five elements, for example, in Ocellus Lucanus. He focuses above all, however, on Aristotelian logic, since he believes that it was even more innovative than his language, allowing us to analyse "reasoning, in all the various forms and figures in which it appears" (III, p. XLVIII). The syllogistic method shows quite remarkable affinities with the geometric method; indeed, both make use of *reductio ad absurdum* proofs and inferential demonstrations, even though syllogism involves a method of conversion which is not applicable to geometric demonstration. In order to develop a correct approach to Aristotelian logic, Monboddo advises a prior reading of the introduction to Porphyry's *Organon* or the commentary by Ammonius of Hermias.

Monboddo's reiterated opinion that the philosophical thought of the Greeks lacks real originality and autonomy serves to emphasize the connection between Orphic and Pythagorean thought and the Western philosophical tradition as a whole. For him, Egypt, as the native land of science and philosophy, was the cradle of philosophical and scientific doctrines jealously preserved for centuries by the Egyptian priests. These doctrines then disseminated to other realms, like India and Persia, from whence they proceeded to influence the Greek world. These reconstructions, mostly based on conjecture, rest, to some extent, upon the interest shown by Monboddo in the accounts of travellers and explorers, such as the letters written by a Jesuit missionary in India, which report logical controversies quite similar to those previously debated in the Western world. In any case, for Monboddo, the Indian doctrines of metempsychosis and cow-worship are sufficient proof of the connections between Indian and Egyptian philosophy. Monboddo also finds the School of Alexandria highly interesting, above all because it marks the return of philosophy to its birthplace. Indeed, in his view, it is Porphyry and Iamblichus who take the credit for explicitly linking great Greek speculation to the Egyptian mysteries where it had its remote origins. These thinkers, as well as Proclus, Philoponus, and Simplicius, have enabled us to understand the real meaning of Aristotelian and Platonic philosophy, and have sought to show the substantial agreement between the two great Greek thinkers. This was possible because they clearly indicated the common source of their doctrines. Monboddo intends to connect himself to this extensive philosophical tradition, which he presents as substantially unitary.

But for Monboddo there are clear indications that the language and philosophy of ancient Greece never totally disappeared, at least in Constantinople and even during the Turkish domination, so that when literary culture revived in Europe, it found its ancient philosophical heritage intact. The humanists' concordism, therefore, did nothing but put forward concepts formulated by the ancient Greek commentators, and the Cambridge Platonists revitalized this ancient tradition. However, for Monboddo, there is no need to develop lengthy discussions of these epigones of ancient theism, since what they did was merely to adjust doctrines already well-established in Antiquity, which continue to possess their philosophical validity, as conferred

by the two major philosophers of all time, Plato and Aristotle. These two thinkers represent the apogee of metaphysical knowledge, and what happened later deserves our attention only in so far as it accords with or differs from previous conceptions. On one hand, Leibniz, Cudworth, and Clarke are the modern representatives of Plato's doctrines; on the other, Descartes, Locke, Newton, and Hume gave rise to a philosophy which is certainly fashionable among contemporaries but which is also incompatible with the demands of true metaphysical speculation.

**7.2.4.4** In accordance with the fundamental idea behind his concept of philosophy – namely, that every true philosophy seeks the immaterial element (mind) inherent in all things – Monboddo traces only those doctrines that enhance the spiritual capabilities of man, first of all in the evolutionary stages of mankind and then in the numerous philosophical expressions which have appeared. However, the clear distinction that he draws between physics and metaphysics, giving the task of determining the sense and philosophical exactitude of empirical inquiry to metaphysics alone, explicitly refers to the views elaborated by classical thought. He is convinced that modern thought, with its mechanicism, has strayed from the path of true philosophy. But the unique feature of Monboddo's conception consists in the fact that for him it is possible to use all the scientific knowledge that the modern ages have gradually accrued in this ultimate explanation. His exaltation of ancient metaphysics is therefore not detrimental to contemporary empirical knowledge. Nevertheless, Monboddo believes that there is only one way to reconcile scientific knowledge (mechanistic by its very nature) and metaphysical knowledge (which, in its most profound sense, is necessarily oriented towards an end), and this can only be the way proposed by Plato and Aristotle, which involves subordinating physics to metaphysics, as concerns ultimate explanations at least.

In truth, Monboddo draws from the Cambridge Platonists another conception which directly determines his way of viewing the development of philosophy. This is the idea that there is a fundamental philosophical core, which consists more of a form of universal knowledge of things than of specific techniques for analysing reality, and that this is present in all great thinkers. In particular, in his view, this universal knowledge represents the true meaning of Plato and Aristotle's philosophy. As we know, this is Neoplatonism, which had flowed through Islamic and Christian thought, as well as through Renaissance concordism and Steucho's *philosophia perennis*, and which, in England, was later widely used in the doctrines of the Cambridge Platonists, notably Gale and Burnet (see *Models*, I, pp. 291–369). This is where Monboddo's rigorously Pythagorean reading not only of Plato, but also of Aristotle derives from; and hence his high esteem for Egyptian learning as the source of every true metaphysical principle. It is not by chance, therefore, that, in addition to ancient Greek historiography, Monboddo makes ample use of sources such as the Cambridge Platonists, in particular Gale. He also shows that he is acquainted with Stanley and Brucker.

**7.2.5** The critical issues raised by Monboddo on the origin of language aroused much interest; but the approach he took to this important topic, borrowing con-

ceptual tools from ancient metaphysicians rather than from modern philosophers, and more particularly his relentless opposition to a thinker such as Locke, who was revered by most Scottish Enlightenment intellectuals, earned him bitter criticism. The reviews that hit him hardest were those by William Smellie and Gilbert Stewart in *The Edinburgh Magazine and Review*. But other reviews, which generously admired his style and vast culture, did not forgive him his “pompous and unnecessary display of metaphysical knowledge, the bigoted attachment to the Greek philosophy”, and numerous other cultural eccentricities, concerning Scottish Enlightenment culture, at least (*The Monthly Review*, XLIX, 1773, pp. 166–178, and 321–332).

Notwithstanding, Monboddo’s theories disseminated not only to France, where the debate on the origins of language was widespread in the numerous social histories of man and mankind, but also to Italy and Germany. It was above all in northern Germany (between Riga and Göttingen, a region traditionally and intensely influenced by British culture), however, that Monboddo’s huge work provoked the greatest interest, and a German translation of *Of the Origin* was made, edited by Ch.A. Schmidt and J.F. Hartknoch: *Des Lord Monboddo Werk von dem Ursprunge und Fortgange der Sprache* (Riga, 1785). J.G. Herder himself wrote the introduction, in which he praised the style of the author, who, “nourished by the lymph of the ancients, does not let any sentimentality lead him astray”. The metaphysical structure, which many of Monboddo’s contemporaries regarded as unacceptable, did not greatly disturb Herder, who limited himself to reproaching Monboddo for his “excessive Aristotelian scrupulousness”. Herder greatly admired the sharpness, conciseness, and precision of Monboddo’s style, evidently drawn from the classical models. He definitely identified the sense of Monboddo’s research as a true “philosophy of man”, because no history of the origins of language can be traced without positing appropriate fundamental principles. This great prophet of German Romanticism considered that a time was approaching when it would be possible to formulate a “philosophy of the human intellect” merely on the basis of inquiries into the origin and nature of language. For the moment, Herder merely expressed the wish that, thanks to the new translation, this method of inquiry, correspondingly amended, would gain ascendancy in Germany too, so that the anticipated renewal would arrive sooner.

**7.2.6** On Monboddo’s life: W. Knight, *Lord Monboddo and Some of his Contemporaries* (London, 1900; repr. Bristol, 1993); DNB, III, pp. 412–414; DECBPh, pp. 629–631.

On his thought (in addition to the Bibliographical Note closing the introduction to this chapter): A. Lovejoy, ‘Monboddo and Rousseau’, in Id., *Essays in the history of ideas* (Baltimore, 1948, 1961<sup>3</sup>), pp. 38–61; Bryson, *Man and Society*, *passim*; A. Verri, *Lord Monboddo, dalla metafisica all’antropologia* (Ravenna, 1975); C. Hobbs, *Rhetoric on the Margins of Modernity: Vico, Condillac, Monboddo* (Carbondale, 2002).

On the reception of Monboddo’s works: *The Edinburgh Magazine and Review*, III (1776), pp. 125–132; MR, XLIX (1773), pp. 166–178, 321–332; NL, XXI (1790), p. 32; GZZ, XII (1783), p. 292.

### 7.3 William Enfield (1741–1797)

#### *The History of Philosophy*

**7.3.1** William Enfield was born in Sudbury, Suffolk, on 29th March 1741; he studied law in Edinburgh, where he was awarded a doctorate in 1774. As a theologian and minister of a Unitarian congregation, he became a highly respected preacher both in Warrington and Norwich, where he distinguished himself by his work as a reformist within the Anglican Church. He died in Norwich on 3rd November 1797.

**7.3.2** In addition to the works Enfield wrote in his role as a preacher, which earned him wide renown, he also produced writings of a more specifically literary, historical, and philosophical character. The group of works related to his preaching activity is broader, both in number and in diffusion: *Sermons for the Use of Families* (1768–1770), *Prayers for the Use of Families* (1770), *The Preacher's Directory* (1771), *The English Preacher, or Sermons on the Principal Subjects of Religion and Morality* (1773–1779, 9 vols), *Sermons on Practical Subjects* (1798, published posthumously), and several other occasional writings of the same category.

The second group, as noted, comprises works of a literary and oratorical nature (*The Speaker or Miscellaneous Pieces Selected from the Best English Writers*, 1774; *Exercises in Elocution*, 1780), a historical nature (*An Essay towards the History of Liverpool*, 1773), a philosophical nature (*Institutes of Natural Philosophy*, 1785), and, published posthumously, *Principles of Mental and Moral Philosophy, to which is prefixed Elements of Logic*, (1809), and an erudite nature (*Discourse on the Progress of Religion and Christian Knowledge*, 1780), as well as a number of articles in volume I of John Aikin's *General Biographical Dictionary* (1799). The latter sphere of interest also comprises the two volumes of *The History of Philosophy from the Earliest Times to the Beginnings of the Present Century, drawn up from Brucker's 'Historia Critica Philosophiae'*, which was first published in London in 1791 and subsequently in 1792, 1819, 1837 (repr. Bristol, 2001), 1839, and 1840.

**7.3.3** Although not intended to be an absolutely original book, Enfield's *History of Philosophy* is far from being a mere translation of Brucker's work. Indeed Enfield declares that his purpose was to communicate to English-speaking readers the "substance" of the great work of the German Historian, "endeavouring to give a faithful representation of its general meaning and spirit", rather than simply "translating the original" (*Hist. Philos.*, 'Preface', pp. IV–VI). To this end, he made equal use of the *Historia critica philosophiae* and the *Institutiones historiae philosophicae*, switching between the two books, depending on his needs and the overall picture he intended to draw. Enfield states that, in 'translation', he has not strictly adhered to the summary of the history of philosophy presented by Brucker in the *Institutiones*, because "such a translation would only have furnished the English reader with a dry sketch of leading incidents and opinions, whereas this work is intended, not only to communicate information by a detail of facts, but to enliven the detail by anecdotes and reflections of various kinds" ('Preface', pp. VI–VII).

From this point of view, the work of the British preacher achieves better results not only in terms of clarity and stylistic elegance – which Brucker's Latin text was not always able to convey, especially to an English reader – but also aspects of originality. As for the overall systemization of the material in the history of philosophy, Enfield does not presume to express any personal opinions in addition to Brucker's preliminary observations, but this is not true of "leading incidents and opinions [ . . . ]. I must not, however, omit to mention certain applications of this branch of knowledge, which from causes into which it is of little consequence to enquire, Brucker has either rarely hinted at, or wholly overlooked". In particular, Enfield tries to integrate the history of philosophy – into the experimental conception of knowledge, according to the approach that characterized the Scottish school: "Experience is universally acknowledged – to be the best preceptor. The history of philosophy is a register of experiments to ascertain the strength of the human understanding. As far as they have been successful, they at once serve to guide and to encourage our future researches. And even those which have been unsuccessful may perhaps prove of equal use in preventing the repetition of unprofitable labours. To infer from the diversity of opinions on metaphysical subjects, which, after ages of disputations, has subsisted, and still continues, among philosophers, that the all field of metaphysics ought to be abandoned as barren ground, would be a rash and precipitate conclusion" (pp. VIII–IX).

On the one hand, the great efforts made by philosophers in all ages to ascertain the origins of things, the nature of the Supreme Being, the existence and immortality of the soul, the foundations of morals, and other important questions gave rise to endless "scholastic logomachies"; on the other, they should teach all researchers to practice "prudence and mistrust" as well as "impartiality and moderation". Adopting the tone of the preacher, Enfield concludes: "Perhaps, too, men's researches into these subjects, have now been carried to such extent, and every argument upon them has been so thoroughly discussed, that it may be possible to determine, with sufficient precision, how far it is possible for the human faculties to proceed in the investigation of truth and why it can proceed no further. It is possible time is not far distant, when an end will be put to fruitless controversy, by distinctly ascertaining the limits of human understanding. If this desirable point be ever attained, it is obvious that one of the means to accomplishing it must be, an accurate attention to the manner in which different sects in philosophy and religion have, from time to time, arisen, and to the various causes of diversity of opinion" (pp. IX–X).

But there is another more practical advantage to be derived from comparing the history of philosophy with currently accepted opinions, namely, that this comparison "will lead to the full discovery of the origin of many notion and practices, which have no other support than antiquity [ . . . ]. The doctrines, the forms, and even the technical language of our public schools, may be easily traced back to the Scholastic age, and through this to the antient Grecian sects, particularly to the Peripatetic school". Yet, besides these cultural considerations, the religious concerns of the preacher, a fervent supporter of Unitarianism, soon emerge in all their vigour: "It is impossible that the present state of knowledge should be fairly compared with antient wisdom, without discovering the absolute necessity of enlarging the field of

education beyond the utmost limits prescribed by our most enlightened ancestors. From the same comparison, similar effects may be confidently expected, with respect to religious tenets and institutions. When it is clearly understood [...] that many of the doctrines commonly received as of divine authority, originated in the Pagan schools, and were thence transplanted at a very early period, into the Christian church; more particularly, when it is generally known [...] that the fundamental doctrine of the unity of the divine nature has undergone corruptions, from which no established church in Christendom has ever yet been purged; it cannot fail to become an object of general attention, to produce such a reform in religion, as shall free its public institutions from the incumbrance of Scholastic subtleties, and to render religion itself more interesting and efficacious, by making its forms more simple and intelligible [...] It has not been without the hope of contributing, in some degree, toward the abolition of antient errors, and the extension of useful knowledge that I have drawn up this history of philosophy” (pp. X–XI).

This religious concern underlies the plan to provide English-speaking readers with a sufficiently extensive and documented history of philosophy, especially concerning the Greek and Christian periods, since at that time the only reference work was Stanley’s *History of Philosophy*, which was not adequate to meet new demands. On the one hand – observes Enfield – Stanley’s style now appears “uncouth and obscure”; on the other, his treatment, which is more the work of “an industrious compiler, than that of a judicious critic”, limits itself to the schools of ancient Greece. In this situation, “a British student, in his search after truth, should be desirous of taking a general survey of the rise and the progress of opinions on the more important subjects of speculation, and by a fair comparison of different systems to draw legitimate conclusions for himself, would seek in vain for the necessary information in any English work”. This situation was all the more absurd because, in the United Kingdom, men of letters, notably historians, had investigated the events of political history “in every possible variety of method and language” and made them the object of “philosophical discussion”, while almost totally neglecting the facts and events which concern philosophy (pp. III–IV).

### 7.3.4 *The History of Philosophy*

**7.3.4.1** Enfield condensed a large part of the material contained in the six volumes of Brucker’s *Historia critica* into two massive octavo volumes, consisting of 530 and 650 pages respectively. Each of the two volumes has a comprehensive and detailed *index nominum* and *index rerum*. The appendix to the second volume includes ‘A Biographical Chart of the Principal Persons Mentioned in this Work’, a sort of synoptic table of all thinkers, divided into the various historical periods. At the beginning of the first volume, after the ‘Preface’ (pp. I–XII), Enfield presents the original subdivision of his material into books and chapters, adding a few words on the subject matter and outlining the content of each paragraph, thus creating a sort of summary of the whole. The footnotes contain short bibliographical notes, mostly



taken from Brucker and only rarely updated. In the 'Preface', Enfield presents the following description of his criteria of historical documentation: "[...] having neither leisure, nor in many cases opportunity, to compare the history with the numerous authorities to which it refers, I was obliged, for the most part, to give my author [Brucker] implicit credit for fidelity and accuracy. This, however, I thought myself justified in doing, partly because, wherever I have consulted the originals, I have found the quotations and references sufficiently correct; but chiefly, on account of the high reputation which the author has obtained upon the continent" ('Preface', p. v).

**7.3.4.2** Enfield faithfully adopts the subdivision of philosophical thought into three periods, just as Brucker had organized it. The first period covers Barbarian philosophy, as it developed among the different nations of the world, and Greek philosophy in its various schools and sects. The second period embraces the philosophy produced by the Romans, Eastern philosophy, Hebrew and Arabic philosophy, and Christian philosophy up to the end of the Middle Ages. The third period comprises the revival of ancient letters and philosophies, as well as eclectic philosophy and the more recent attempts to advance the progress of philosophy by new methods or within particular fields of study.

**7.3.4.3** As previously observed, Enfield's explicit intention to shape Brucker's historiographical perspectives is substantially limited to his adaptation of the concepts to his own aspirations for religious reform. It is worth presenting a few examples from Enfield's treatment to show the particular nature of his re-working of the original. In his account of Aristotle's thought, while closely following Brucker's *Historia critica*, Enfield begins by removing the parts that represent pure scholarship, and reduces the bibliographical references in the footnotes to the absolute minimum. He thus succeeds in providing a thorough outline of Aristotle, from a broad and comprehensive biography to a critical assessment of his philosophy. His style is always eloquent and captivating, never slow and tedious. Although the substance of the various concepts can be easily recognized as Brucker's formulation, the narrative form and general tone expressing these concepts are certainly new. In some cases, Enfield has added new sections himself, as in the case of Aristotle's life, in which a whole passage from Philip of Macedon's letter to Aristotle is incorporated into the text in order to enrich the account (*Hist. Philos.*, I, p. 257). Other amendments include adjusting the technical language of Aristotelian philosophy to the philosophical terminology commonly used in the United Kingdom: he makes it clear, for example, that the term 'theoretical philosophy' designates physics, pneumatology, ontology, and mathematics; he pauses to discuss Aristotle's categories, taking into account the systemization proposed in Britain by James Harris in the mid-eighteenth century; and again, he pauses to give concrete examples of syllogisms in their various forms, taking them from handbooks of logic written by English authors (I, pp. 268–271).

Special emphasis is given to the philosophy of the ancient Christians, in order to highlight the continual modifications and corruptions in the thought that was elaborated by the primitive Church. Brucker's work had already revealed this

intention but Enfield seems, on the whole, to assign even greater relevance to this historical period, since his account covers a good fifty pages. The treatments devoted to Christian philosophy in the Middle Ages and Scholastic philosophy are also comparatively lengthy at 33 pages and 46 pages respectively. Enfield's description of the "obscurity" known as the Middle Ages is permeated with personal remarks, both on a linguistic and a doctrinal level: "[...] these parts of the history of philosophy resembles a barren wilderness, where the traveller is fatigued with beholding dreary waste, in which he meets with scarcely a single object to relieve his eyes, or amuse his fancy" (II, pp. 317–318). The powerful image of the "deserted land" does not appear in Brucker, and neither does he make mention of the historian's "fancy" and curious "eye"; indeed, "wonder" and "fancy" are distinctive terms of the cognitive conception held by Hume and Smith as well as by the Scottish historiography of the time.

Similarly, a number of other observations, which also appear in Brucker, are elevated to fundamental theories in Enfield's 'translation': "[...] both the Scholastic and the Mystic Theology, which sprung up in this period, owed their rise and increase to the mixture of the dogmas of Pagan philosophy with the doctrines of Christianity. Although these two systems of theology differ in their leading characters; the former attempting to derive the confirmation of divine truth from philosophy; the latter calling it in its aid to support the spirit of fanaticism; the true origin of both will be found to have been, an injudicious application of the Peripatetic and Platonic philosophy to the illustration of theology" (II, p. 326).

**7.3.4.4** Enfield's 'translation' thus becomes a selection – by no means disinterested or impartial – from the two weighty tomes that constitute the fourth volume of Brucker's *Historia critica*. He preserves the detailed introduction to the Renaissance and a description of the modern sceptics, the "scripturalist" philosophers (whom Brucker had called *philosophi Mosaïci et christiani*), the theosophists, and the enemies of philosophy, whereas the subject of the revival of the ancient schools is covered in just a few pages. This selection reveals a clear preference for religious and theological themes. Individual thinkers of the modern age are also given limited space: about 60 pages are devoted to nine authors, among whom outstanding figures such as Bacon, Descartes, and Leibniz are dealt with separately, and over 40 pages are devoted to the new philosophical tendencies, in which Locke is included without any particular prominence.

**7.3.5** As attested by the several editions produced, Enfield's *History of Philosophy* achieved considerable success in English-speaking educational circles, probably on account of its elegant and clear style. Nevertheless, there is evidence that it was used very little in more erudite circles, since most scholars preferred to refer directly to Brucker's works. This situation remained unchanged until the mid-nineteenth century, as G.H. Lewes confirms in his *Biographical History of Philosophy* (London, 1845). In his introduction, Lewes reluctantly acknowledges that "although the translation of Ritters's *History of Philosophy* has driven Enfield from the shelves of the learned, yet its cost and voluminousness have prevented its superseding Enfield with the many". Nevertheless, Lewes' harsh criticisms do

not spare Enfield, who is judged to be “a man equally without erudition and capacity [...] he simply abridged the ill-digested work of a man of immense erudition”. And he continues: “Dr. Enfield’s Abridgement possesses all the faults of the arrangements and dullness of Brucker’s work, to which he has added no inconsiderable dullness and blundering of his own. Moreover, his references are shamefully inaccurate. Yet his book has been reprinted in a cheap form, and extensively bought: it certainly has not been extensively read” (Lewes, *Biographical History*, p. 4). Where the broad English-speaking public were concerned, Enfield’s epitome was to be totally eclipsed only in the second half of the nineteenth century, by the works of Lewes himself.

**7.3.6** On Enfield’s life and historiographical work: J. Gentile, ‘William Enfield’, in *18th century British and American Rhetorics and Rhetoricians: Critical Studies and Sources*, ed. M. G. Moran (Westport, 1994), pp. 65–69; DECBPh, pp. 313–316; Braun, p. 179, note 147; ‘Introduction’ by K. Haakonssen to new edition of *History of Philosophy* (Bristol, 2001); *Models*, II, pp. 562–563 and 619–620; J.C. Laursen, ‘Enfield’s Brucker and Christian Anti-scepticism in Enlightenment Historiography of Philosophy’, in *Scepticism in the Eighteenth Century: Enlightenment, Lumières, Aufklärung*, S. Charles and P.J. Smith eds. (Dordrecht, 2013), pp. 155–169.

## 7.4 Dugald Stewart (1753–1828)

### *Dissertation Exhibiting the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy*

**7.4.1** Born on 22nd November, 1753, Dugald Stewart was educated at Edinburgh university by John Stevenson and Adam Ferguson, and then at in Glasgow by Thomas Reid. At the age of 22, he returned to the University of Edinburgh to teach mathematics. He succeeded Ferguson to the chair of moral philosophy, which he held until 1810, when he retired from his academic duties due to poor health. He visited France for the first time in 1783 and returned there in the summers of 1788 and 1789. In Paris, he formed lasting friendships with Degérando and Prévost, and had the opportunity to associate with several *philosophes*, including Suard, Morellet, and Raynal. The personal contacts he established in French circles facilitated the dissemination of his writings and the prompt translation of many of them by Prévost and others. Many of his works were completed after his retirement, when he lived in Kinneil, near Edinburgh. In 1822 he was struck by paralysis, but continued to work until his death, on 11th June, 1828, in order to bring his works to completion.

**7.4.2** Stewart began his philosophical activity when he was just over 20 years old, with a number of essays that were read before Edinburgh’s Speculative Society and later incorporated into the *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, the first volume of which was published in 1792 (the second volume appeared in 1813 and the third in 1827). His *Outlines of Moral Philosophy*, which contain his lessons on moral philosophy, were also completed in different periods: the first part in 1793,

and the last in 1828 together with *The Philosophy of Active and Moral Powers of Man*. His *Philosophical Essays* (1810) are a collection of various critical historical essays on several British thinkers. In 1793 Stewart read his *Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith* before the Royal Society in Edinburgh, a work which was subsequently included in the posthumous volume containing Smith's *Essays on Philosophical Subjects*. In 1796 and 1802, respectively, again before the Royal Society, he read two memoirs, one in honour of Robertson and the other of Reid. The first part of his *Dissertation exhibiting the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy since the Revival of Letters in Europe* appeared in 1815 and the second part appeared in 1821, as introductory essays to the supplements to the fourth and fifth editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Stewart's *Collected Works* in 11 volumes were edited by William Hamilton (London, 1854–1860; repr. with an Introduction by K. Haakonssen, Bristol, 1994), the edition referred to here, unless otherwise stated. Volume I of this edition is entirely devoted to the *Dissertation*.

**7.4.3** The long introduction at the beginning of the *Dissertation* (pp. 1–22) – albeit ostensibly concerned with his polemic against D'Alembert – appears to have the aim of clarifying Stewart's own concept of the history of philosophy. The polemic was initially occasioned by the encyclopaedic systemization proposed by D'Alembert in his *Discours préliminaire*; but it ended up considering the wider question of how knowledge is understood and, in particular, of how different forms of knowledge (including those of the past) are conceived and used to build a truly 'enlightened' culture (*Dissertation*, pp. 1–2). In the first place, Stewart observed D'Alembert's difficulties when attempting to explain the fundamental distinction between the "genealogy of the sciences" and the "encyclopedic arrangement of the objects of human knowledge". According to D'Alembert, we use the former to trace our ideas and knowledge back to their genesis, whereas the latter serve to place the different aspects of knowledge within a general framework as if they were the different branches of a single tree. But D'Alembert disregards this distinction when he considers the "general scheme" at times as "a map or a chart of the intellectual world", and at times as a "genealogical or encyclopedical tree" showing the diverse affinities shared by the disciplines. Stewart, who openly criticizes the use of the term 'genealogy' to denote the encyclopaedic systemization of knowledge, reproaches D'Alembert on one hand for maintaining that in order to create this "encyclopaedical tree" successfully it is necessary to know "the natural progress of the mind" with a historical analysis of the development of the various disciplines, and, on the other, for admitting that the two perspectives – the genealogical and the systematic – lead to quite different results. In his work, therefore, the two different approaches remain inextricably entangled, and the situation is made worse by the fact that he believes it possible to determine how our ideas are generated and linked together in a chain by means of a historical survey (pp. 2–3).

While acknowledging that, in drawing his historical picture, D'Alembert "had displayed much ingenuity and invention", Stewart observes that "the depth and solidity of his general train of thought may be questioned". The more significant mistakes which, in spite of everything, appear in the historical treatment itself "may

be fairly ascribed to a certain vagueness and indecision in the author’s idea, with regard to the scope of his inquiries” (p. 3). When – proceeding from a theory of the mind and from the order followed by human nature in the development of mental powers – D’Alembert seeks to outline the successive steps that lead from one achievement to the next, he does not take into due consideration the difference between the “history of the human species” and “that of the civilized and inquisitive individual”. To establish a distinction between these two perspectives was fundamental for the Scottish thinkers, who shared Hume’s desire to shed light on the manifold manifestations of human ingenuity and industriousness with a deep knowledge of human nature. D’Alembert seems to be primarily interested in the former, and rightly so, but in practice he joins these two aspects so closely that it is impossible to discern which of the two is preeminent in his thought. In this way, the historical picture of the development of the sciences is not clarified, but rather becomes obscure, especially when it comes to describing the origin and early development of rational knowledge. Stewart observes that D’Alembert crowds his exposition with a series of “meditations” analogous to those which constitute the introduction to the philosophy of Descartes. These notions were, of course, normally elaborated subsequent to the study of external nature and “are confined to a comparatively small number of recluse metaphysicians” (pp. 3–4). In other words, for Stewart, only a philosophy of human nature in its original state can provide the intellectual tools needed to understand the progress made by man.

It was an excessive “veneration” for Bacon that prevented D’Alembert from benefiting from his own productive and versatile genius, and which “engaged him in the fruitless task of attempting, by means of arbitrary definitions, to draw a veil over incurable defects and blemishes”. It must be acknowledged, asserts Stewart, that there is something peculiar in Bacon’s methodology that can captivate the imagination of those who concern themselves with the classification of knowledge.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Bacon’s division of knowledge into history, philosophy, and poetry – corresponding to the three specific faculties of memory, reason, and imagination – is certainly fascinating and drew a large following because it seemed clear and simple, although it was no longer acceptable from a logical viewpoint. Nor, however, is it possible to maintain that “the magnificent design conceived by Bacon, of enumerating, defining and classifying the multifarious objects of human knowledge [...] was nothing more than the abortive offspring of a warm imagination, unsusceptible of any useful application to enlighten the mind”, because at the time when Bacon was writing it was important to provide scholars with a comprehensive representation of knowledge. In practice, this plan showed its fruitfulness in the considerable number of academies and scientific societies that it gave rise to. Bacon’s genius in creating an overall picture and providing numerous particular notions is indisputable: indeed in those cases where he was unable to

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<sup>16</sup>*Dissertation*. p. 6: “In this part of Bacon’s logic, it must, at the same time, be owned, that there is something peculiarly captivating to the fancy; and accordingly, it has united in its favour the suffrages of almost all the succeeding authors who have treated of the same subject”.

complete the intellectual map, it has remained unfinished up to the present day, despite the joint efforts and talents of D'Alembert and Diderot, "aided by all the lights of the 18th century" (pp. 13–14).

D'Alembert's mistake lay in re-proposing Bacon's classification without any critical ability, thus making it worse. Stewart embarks on a wide-ranging and profound criticism of Bacon's concept, starting with the threefold distinction of the faculties of the mind. Indeed, though he admits Degérando's observation that Bacon's tripartite division is not to be understood too restrictively, but rather as a sign of the fact that, in each of the three respective branches, there is one faculty that predominates, it still remains unclear, for example, why memory is more necessary to the historian than to the philosopher or the poet. Moreover, "on the other hand, of what value, in the circle of the sciences, would be a collection of historical details, accumulated without discrimination, without a scrupulous examination of evidence, or without any attempt to compare and to generalize?" Clearly, in order to elaborate a history thus conceived "it may be justly affirmed that the rarest and most comprehensive combination of all our mental gifts is indispensably requisite", far beyond the rigid and artificial classifications formulated by Bacon and the French Encyclopaedists (p. 9).

But Stewart raises another and "still more formidable" objection to Bacon's classification, on account of "the very imperfect and partial analysis of the mind". Why does Bacon completely neglect the function of "abstraction" and "generalization"? On the contrary, these two faculties constitute "the most essential of all distinctions between the intellectual characters of individuals". Bacon's classification was formulated such a long time ago that other peculiarities are now apparent within it, such as the placing of the mechanical arts in the historical field, as if they depended solely on the faculty of memory, or the great amount of room given to the art of poetry, which has an entire faculty at its disposal. Stewart concludes: "these objections apply in common to Bacon and to D'Alembert". But with his "false refinement", D'Alembert "has rendered the classification of his predecessor incomparably more indistinct and illogical than it seemed to be before" (pp. 9–10). Indeed, as regards the function of the imagination, D'Alembert states that, among the disciplines related to reason, metaphysics and geometry are those in which imagination plays a more important role. According to Stewart, this is a paradoxical statement. Nor can we excuse him by asserting that, in this case, D'Alembert has interpreted the word 'imagination' as a synonym for 'invention', as many do, because the French Encyclopaedist immediately adds that "the most refined operations of reason, consisting in the creation of generals which do not fall under the cognizance of our senses, naturally lead to the exercise of the Imagination". In other words, his perspective actually reveals a tendency to identify 'imagination' with 'abstraction', which are in fact two totally different faculties. One certainly would not expect such a gross error on the part of "a logician who previously limited the province of imagination to the imitation of material objects; a limitation, it may be remarked in passing, which is neither sanctioned by common use, nor by just views of the philosophy of the Mind" (p. 11).

Stewart’s criticisms are not merely intended to show the inconsistencies and mistakes that are present in the encyclopaedic classification proposed by D’Alembert, but are aimed to prove that any other – present or future – attempt of this kind would turn out to be unsatisfactory (p. 12). For this reason, Stewart also examines the subdivision of knowledge put forward by Locke. The fact that this subdivision was highly esteemed by several thinkers, and largely still is, leads us to seek in it “the bases for a new classification of the sciences”. In reality, although presented by Locke as original, this threefold division of knowledge into natural philosophy, practical philosophy, and the doctrine of signs, coincides exactly with the division into physics, ethics, and logic adopted by philosophers in ancient Greece, as Adam Smith correctly observed (pp. 15–18). But this ancient and authoritative subdivision has the disadvantage of placing astronomy, mechanics, optics, and so on, alongside natural theology and the philosophy of the human mind, which are separated from ethics and logic with which they have a strong affinity. It is true that the human mind is part of the great system of the universe just like the whole material world, but there is no doubt that they represent completely different parts: ‘mind’ and ‘matter’. The latter is properly investigated through observation, the former through reflection. In the case of history, it would be “an abuse of language” to indistinctly apply the same methods of analysis to these two spheres, because “the business of philosophy is not to resolve the phenomena of the one into those the other, but merely to ascertain the general laws which regulate their mutual connexion” (pp. 18–19).

At this point, since “in the actual state of logical science, of uniting the opinions of the learned in favour of any one scheme of partition”, the only distinction that Stewart declares himself willing to accept is precisely that between the phenomena pertaining to mind and the phenomena pertaining to matter. Even the language of the materialists describes these two types of phenomena in a radically different manner, and so our knowledge too views them as being much more heterogeneous than any other type of phenomena. Consequently, Stewart considers the distinction between matter and mind to be the only one acceptable and such as to constitute “the groundwork of an Encyclopedical classification of the sciences and arts”. Thus in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, unlike the French *Encyclopédie*, the entries concerning the phenomena of the mind are carefully distinguished from those concerning matter. It therefore includes dissertations devoted to the history of the metaphysical, ethical, and political doctrines (prepared by Stewart himself) as well as dissertations concerning mathematics and the other physical sciences. Furthermore, this “division of work” has become necessary due to the immense developments made – since the age of D’Alembert – in the fields of mathematics, physics, the arts of commerce, and above all chemistry, as a consequence of the rapid succession of discoveries made in these disciplines (p. 21). Unfortunately, in the field of research concerning the phenomena of the mind, it is not always possible to discern a progress similar to that characterizing the other disciplines. In the phenomena of the mind, it has frequently happened that “casual associations lead mankind astray”. These wrong associations quite often resulted from false systems of religion, oppressive forms of government, and unfounded educational projects. The consequence of this difference, concludes Stewart, is that “while the physical and mathematical discoveries of former ages

present themselves to the hand of the historian like masses of pure and native gold, the truth which we are here in quest may be compared to *iron*, which, although at once the most necessary and the most widely diffused of all metals, commonly requires a discriminating eye to detect its existence, and a tedious, as well as a nice process, to extract it from the ore" (p. 20).

Advances in philosophical, moral, and political doctrines take place primarily by eradicating those accidental wrong associations which had fostered prejudices and misinterpretations, thus releasing the part of noble metal from the complex amalgam of philosophical systems. The history of philosophy is therefore like a sieve sifting the doctrines of the past, in search of the wrong associations which prevent us from grasping the truth. It is characteristic of the "history of our prejudices", continues Stewart, "that as soon as the film falls from the intellectual eye, we are apt to lose all recollection of our former blindness [...] but the moment the eye has caught the exact form and dimensions of its object, the spell is broken for ever, nor can any effort of thought again conjure up the spectres which have vanished". This strengthens us in our belief that "the reason of the species is progressive" and does not return to its mistakes (p. 21).

As is evident, the task assigned to the historian of philosophical thought cannot be planned within a rigid encyclopaedic conception of knowledge precisely because it requires a "discriminating eye" and a "nice process" which cannot be fixed in a mechanical and definitive way. In this perspective, the history of philosophy can be nothing other than a *philosophical history*, in the sense that it has the task of reconstructing the conceptual framework which explains the origin, dependence, and connection of certain doctrines with respect to religious, social, and political prejudices, in order to break the enchantment that makes us see them as true. At the same time, by gradually reassembling the truths gained through this process of sieving and disenchanting, the historian reconstructs that concatenation of fundamental ideas which represents the authentic philosophical system – continuously perfectible and expandable – that men have succeeded in elaborating in recent times.

In the short preface to his historical treatment, Stewart makes clear that the method he adopts is to "avoid, as far is consistent with distinctness and perspicuity, the minuteness of the mere bibliographer; and, instead of attempting to amuse my readers with a series of critical epigrams, or to dazzle them with a rapid succession of evanescent portraits, [I] shall study to fix their attention on those great lights of the world by whom the torch of science has been successively seized and transmitted". In his view, enumerating "the names and the labours of obscure and even secondary authors" does not help at all "to illustrate the origin and filiation of consecutive systems, or the gradual development and progress of the human mind" (pp. 23–24), which is instead the principal task of a "philosophical history". This type of history is characterized by the "natural connexion of ideas", which is much more than "the order of dates".<sup>17</sup> Stewart's intention is to connect the various authors

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<sup>17</sup> *Dissertation*, p. 107: "The preceding remarks lead me, by a natural connexion of ideas (to which I am here much more inclined to attend than to the order of dates) to another writer of the seventeenth



and philosophical systems, looking for the sources of problems and following their subsequent development through the centuries, while assessing the current validity of the solutions proposed by the authors of the past, all characterized by the typical Enlightenment tendency to exalt the "triumph of reason over superstition and bigotry" (p. 213).

Indeed Stewart's concern is not to offer an exhaustive account of the various philosophical systems; rather, by a process of complex critical analysis and his own personal reconstruction, he takes from each those milestones in philosophical thinking which allow him to regard the history of thought as a continuous progression, at least from the time of the revival of letters up to his own. This methodology, which rests on an unbiased search for the best solutions to philosophical problems and is also receptive to contributions from other civilizations, expresses the great Enlightenment utopia of a free commerce of ideas. However, precisely because it is based on the philosopher's critical judgement, rather than on the orderly acquisition of the different disciplines, it tends to take on a new dimension. More precisely, Stewart is on one hand aware of the unpredictable interweaving of fields of study which appear so different from one other,<sup>18</sup> and on the other of the dawn of new philosophical explanations (notably, Indian and Chinese) which are alternative to those of the 'West' and no longer represent mere literary or artistic curiosities, but reveal enough rational strength to unsettle the otherwise stable 'Enlightenment reason'. Stewart attempts to demonstrate the eminently religious and theological character of the Eastern philosophical tradition and to make it depend on the Greek influence on the Indian world (pp. 425–427). What is certain is that these comparisons and the study of these combinations of concepts would deeply transform Western thought, making it less confident in the lights of its own reason, but more willing, as Stewart himself desired, to compare the meditations of Marcus Aurelius with the maxims of Confucius, the sayings of Socrates, the revealed truths of the Christian religion, and the doctrines formulated by other religions (p. 105).

Stewart, who by that time represented one of the last great figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, engendered a good deal of profound philosophical literature on

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century, whose influence over the literary and philosophical taste of France has been far greater than seems to be commonly imagined".

<sup>18</sup>*Dissertation.*, pp. 14–15: "How much remains to be previously done for the improvement of that part of logic, whose province it is to fix the limits by which contiguous departments of study are defined and separated! And how many unsuspected affinities may be reasonably presumed to exist among sciences, which, to our circumscribed views, appear at present the most alien from each other! The abstract geometry of Apollonius and Archimedes was found, after an interval of two thousand years, to furnish a torch to the physical inquiries of Newton; while, in the farther progress of knowledge, the Etymology of Languages has been happily employed to fill up the chasms of Ancient History; and the conclusions of Comparative Anatomy, to illustrate the Theory of the Earth".

the subject of comparisons.<sup>19</sup> In this regard, his history of Western philosophical thought can take credit for having further encouraged these comparisons, to such an extent as to totally reverse the Enlightenment perspective. Indeed it was even to be credited with the rehabilitation of the medieval philosophical tradition, as seen in the work of Stewart's friend and collaborator James Mackintosh, albeit as a reflection of the Chinese and Indian philosophical traditions (see below, 7.4.5).

#### **7.4.4 *Dissertation Exhibiting the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical, and Political Philosophy***

**7.4.4.1** This work is a lengthy discussion of 630 pages (in the edition used here), the third section of which, devoted to the progress of ethical and political philosophy, remains incomplete. The fragment of the final chapter of this section, devoted to 'Tendencies and Results' and first published by Hamilton in 1854, was partly completed by Stewart's daughter Mary. The *Dissertation* consists of a long 'Preface' (pp. 1–22), which is almost entirely directed against D'Alembert's *Discours préliminaire*, and two parts: the first (pp. 1–202) covers the period from the revival of letters up to the very end of the seventeenth century; the second (pp. 203–527) is devoted to the eighteenth century. In the second part, given the size of the subject, Stewart dismisses the idea of including moral and political philosophy as well. These constitute the object of a separate treatment. Both parts are preceded by short methodological introductions. The text has exhaustive footnotes, mostly of a historical and scholarly nature, but theoretical digressions frequently appear too. The 'Notes and Illustrations' placed at the end of the work containing the necessary documentation (pp. 529–617) are particularly lengthy. There is a detailed index of names and subjects to aid rapid consultation.

**7.4.4.2** As noted above, the work is devoted to the progress of philosophy from the period of the revival of letters up to the end of the eighteenth century. This is because, according to Stewart, it was only during the last two centuries, the seventeenth and the eighteenth, that philosophical sciences had made tangible progress and also because extending the work to cover the philosophy of the ancient world would have meant cramming an excessive amount of subject matter into a necessarily limited framework (*Dissertation*, p. 23). Within this period, which,

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<sup>19</sup> Among the studies which offered 'comparisons' between Eastern and Western philosophy, of whose existence Stewart was certainly aware, cf. William Jones, *Dissertation on the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India*, in *Dissertations* [...] (London, 1792); John Ogilvie, *The Theology of Plato compared with the Principles of Oriental and Grecian Philosophers* (London, 1793). As regards the 'Romantic' outcomes of these tendencies, see F. Baldensperger, '1793–1794: Climatic Times for 'Romantic Tendencies in English Ideology'', *J. Hist. Ideas*, V (1944), pp. 3–20; A.O. Lovejoy, 'The Chinese Origin of a Romanticism', in Id., *Essays in the History of Ideas* (New York, 1955), pp. 99–135.

all things considered, was rather uniform, Stewart considers only Locke to have initiated a "new era" in the history of philosophy, on account of the profound influence of his thought throughout Europe and also on account of the substantial correctness of his philosophical doctrines.

**7.4.4.3** For Stewart, the history of thought performs a double function of disenchanting us from prejudices and errors and reconstructing the fundamental and true doctrines produced by the human spirit. Hence, even the history of the thought produced in the period – the Middle Ages – which Stewart designates as "the most melancholy blank" in human history, marked by the "inseparable connexion between ignorance and prejudice on the one hand, and vice, misery, and slavery on the other", should rightly be included in this programme, even though it is entirely negative: "It would furnish a very interesting and instructive subject of speculation, to record and to illustrate (with the spirit, however, rather of a philosopher than of an antiquary) the various abortive efforts, which, during this protracted and seemingly hopeless period of a thousand years, were made by enlightened individuals, to impart to their contemporaries the fruits of their own acquirements". An inquiry of this kind would not only be highly 'philosophical', but also certainly helpful in safeguarding us against "any future recurrence of a similar calamity" (*Dissertation*, p. 25).

The revival of letters brought the period of "gothic darkness" (p. 506) to a definitive conclusion. At the beginning, however, "the progress of useful knowledge was extremely slow" in the new epoch too, because "the passion for logical disputation was succeeded by an unbounded admiration for the wisdom of antiquity; and in proportion as the pedantry of the schools disappeared in the universities, that of erudition and philology occupied its place" (p. 27). There are several interacting reasons for the change in mentality which took place in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is true that the first group of humanists emerged on the basis of the Greek culture imported from the East after the fall of Constantinople; and it is true that the invention of printing can be regarded as one of the main causes of the "progress of the human mind"; but it is also true that the Protestant Reformation, which immediately followed these decisive events, and in a great measure ensued from them, represented, by virtue of its "congenial freedom of inquiry", the necessary condition for attaining significant results (pp. 29–30).

These major circumstances must be added to many others, which all helped to "accelerate the progress of knowledge". Among these conditions, let us mention, first of all, "the rise of the lower orders in the different countries of Europe"; indeed, if a certain social well-being had not become widespread, even the invention of printing would have been to little advantage. Equally influential and essential in determining the new tendencies was the use of the vernacular languages in the different nations, the experimental attitude within the sciences, and the discovery of the New World and the passage through the Cape of Good Hope, which opened up the route to the Indies. The mere enumeration of the 'causes' or 'circumstances' which determined the new era proves how slow and complex the movement was which brought about the revival of letters, arts, and sciences throughout Europe (p. 32).

Moral philosophy developed shortly before the seventeenth century, since no “attempts were to be made to trace, with analytical accuracy, the moral phenomena of human life to their first principles in the constitution and condition of man”. The earlier Protestant writers vigorously applied themselves to elevating “the moral judgement and moral feelings of the human race [...] from the casuistical subtleties, with which the schoolmen and monks of the middle ages had studied to obscure the light of nature, and to stifle the voice of conscience”. Nevertheless, at the same time as the aforementioned events which made the revival of letters possible, there was an extremely serious obstacle hampering the progress of moral philosophy and the development of an appropriate political government in “the rapid growth and extensive influence of the Machiavellian school” (pp. 38–40).

In the general introduction to the period, Stewart had already treated Machiavelli at length, viewing him both as a serious writer and thinker, but always with grave reservations: “no writer, certainly, either in ancient or in modern times, has ever united, in a more remarkable degree, a greater variety of the most dissimilar and seemingly the most discordant gifts and attainments”. Although endowed with an extraordinary mind, Machiavelli cannot be reckoned among the benefactors of humanity, not only because he shows no “marks of that lively sympathy with the fortunes of the human race, or of that warm zeal for the interests of truth and justice” which properly characterize the benefactors of humanity, but also because he was unable to detect “the mighty changes in human affairs, which, in consequence of the recent invention of printing, were about to result from the progress of reason and the diffusion of knowledge”. His treatise *The Prince* exerted a detrimental influence on sovereigns, ministers, and popes. Even though he manifested no sympathy towards the priesthood, in practice the political principles he enunciated became “the Gospel” orienting the political activity of the Roman Church. In conclusion, for Stewart, “the progress of political philosophy, and along with it of morality and good order, in every part of Europe, since the period of which I am now speaking forms so pleasing a comment on the profligate and short-sighted policy of Machiavelli”. In Italy there were a number of other “scholars, historians, artists, and wits” who enlightened “that splendid period of its history which commences with the revival of letters” (pp. 46–48). Among them, special emphasis is placed on Alberico Gentili, whose political doctrines, popular above all in England and Germany, had the merit of opposing the harmful effect of the doctrines enounced by the author of *The Prince*. A review of the “fathers of the revival of letters” in the various European nations concludes the general description of the period.

The part of the work containing the more detailed treatment begins with a chapter devoted to the progress of philosophy in England, notably with Bacon and Hobbes. Francis Bacon’s merits are described not so much on account of his value as “the father of Experimental Philosophy”, as on account of “the lights he has struck out in various branches of the philosophy of mind”, on account of which he is much appreciated. Even today, we owe Bacon – who certainly did not stand out for his knowledge of the physical world in his time – the deep conviction that it is possible to predict the future by relying uniquely on the powers of the mind, albeit directed and reinforced by logical rules. We also owe him a clear anticipation of

the mutual influence existing between thought and language, a theme which was to be developed by Locke, and of a universal grammar. Bacon obviously formulated erroneous conceptions as well, mostly due to "the habits of thinking prevalent in his time", and Stewart points them out inflexibly in order to provide "a convenient opportunity for remarking the progress and diffusion of the philosophical spirit since the beginning of the seventeenth century" (pp. 64–69).

Quite different is the figure Hobbes, even though he was a contemporary and, for some time, even a close friend of Bacon: "such was the obstinacy of his temper, and his overweening self-conceit, that, instead of co-operating with Bacon in the execution of his magnificent design, he resolved to rear, on a foundation exclusively his own, a complete structure both of moral and physical science; disdaining to avail himself even of the materials collected by his predecessors, and treating the experimentarian philosophers as objects only of contempt and ridicule". In reality – as Stewart polemically points out – Hobbes' purpose was to "strengthen the hands of sovereigns against the rising spirit of democracy, by arming them with the weapons of a new philosophy" (pp. 80–81). Stewart mentions the major doctrines of his political philosophy, but almost exclusively with the intention of later comparing them with those elaborated by Locke to thus show their evil character more clearly. Hobbes' political doctrines are directly related to his ethical doctrines. Even though the ideas contained in his works, which he frequently expressed with maxims which were to become famous, did cause scandal, it is true that many, even among his contemporaries, tacitly borrowed them, or at least made use of them.

In any case, the widespread reaction which arose against Hobbes' doctrines was of great importance because it led to Cudworth's first extensive criticism of arbitrary free will in the fields of ethics and politics and, furthermore, because – according to the Platonic tradition – it justly exalted the powers of the intellect as opposed to those of the senses. But, concludes Stewart, "the principal importance of Cudworth, as an ethical writer, arises from the influence of his argument concerning the immutability of right and wrong on the various theories of morals which appeared in the course of the eighteenth century". As we shall see, Stewart was to trace a large part of Kant's doctrines back to this conception. As for Cudworth's major work, *The Intellectual System*, Stewart declares that, even though it no longer appeals to the current taste, it nevertheless "remains a precious mine of information to those whose curiosity may lead them to study the spirit of the ancient theories" (pp. 86–89). And he continues: "from the writings of Hobbes to those of Locke the transition is easy and obvious" (p. 93), but a careful analysis of the historical epochs in which the two authors lived, as well as of the philosophical developments occurring in the rest of Europe, may help us to better understand the doctrinal differences existing between them. Indeed, Hobbes' philosophy must be placed in the political context of the Restoration and "in the sudden tide of licentiousness, both in principles and in practice, which burst into this island at the moment of the Restoration" (p. 90). A quite different political atmosphere surrounded Locke, who was living at the time of constitutional monarchy. In any case, Locke's philosophy can be better understood by taking into account the philosophical changes occurring on the Continent, notably in France.

Stewart devotes lengthy treatments to Montaigne, Charron, and La Rochefoucauld in the field of moral philosophy, and Descartes, Gassendi, and Malebranche in the field of metaphysics. Although Montaigne belongs to an earlier period, he can nevertheless be situated “at the head of the French writers who contributed, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, to turn the thoughts of their countrymen to subjects connected with the Philosophy of Mind [ . . . ]. The only study which seems ever to have engaged his attention was that of man; and for this he was singularly fitted, by a rare combination of that talent for observation which belongs to men of the world, with those habits of abstracted reflection, which men of the world have commonly so little disposition to cultivate”. And Stewart continues: “Without a union of these two powers (reflection and observation), the study of Man can never be successfully prosecuted. It is only by retiring within ourselves that we can obtain a key to the characters of others; and it is only by observing and comparing the characters of others that we can thoroughly understand and appreciate our own”. What is more valuable in Montaigne is not the truth or novelty of his doctrines, but “the liveliness and felicity with which we see embodied in words the previous wanderings of our own imaginations”. And yet, in his maxims, we can find the “seeds” of a number of those paradoxical doctrines which underlie the metaphysical edifice erected by Helvétius and others. Obviously, what Montaigne did was merely “to start the problem” rather than “to investigate the solution”; but his paradoxical statements still prove to be useful to awaken our faculties in our search for truth (pp. 98–101).

As regards Charron, Montaigne’s best friend, while he was “endowed with talents far inferior in force and originality to those of his master, he possessed, nevertheless, a much sounder and more regulated judgment”, and he often concerned himself with looking for “an antidote against the more pernicious errors of his friend” in the Catholic religion (pp. 105–106). It is strange, Stewart declares, that “those who have treated of the history of French philosophy” did not rightly estimate the weight of these authors, yet they can truly be considered as “the first French moralists”, and as such they deeply influenced the mode of thinking of their countrymen. Stewart situates La Rochefoucauld on the same line of thought, even though he comes later in time, since he asserts he is much more interested in the correlation of ideas than in the chronological sequence of dates: “I have united the names, of Montaigne and of La Rochefoucauld, because I consider their writings as rather addressed to the world at large, than to the small and select class of speculative students. Neither of them can be said to have enriched the stock of human knowledge by the addition of any one important general conclusion; but the maxims of both have operated very extensively and powerfully on the taste and principles of the higher orders all over Europe, and predisposed them to give a welcome reception to the same ideas, when afterwards reproduced with the imposing appendages of logical method, and of a technical phraseology” (p. 111).

In presenting Descartes’ thought, Stewart prefers to stress his merits in analysing the mental faculties rather than his physical and ethical doctrines. Indeed, Descartes showed for the first time “the possibility of studying the mental phenomena, without reference to any facts but those which rest on the evidence of consciousness”

(pp. 113–114). The powers of "reflection" were to prove fundamental in seeking a solution to the traditional problems of philosophy, such as the distinction between spirit and matter and the immortality of the soul. Furthermore, the French philosopher demonstrated the fruitfulness of his method as soon as he was able, "by a chain of logical reasoning", to prove many other truths in the most diverse fields, starting from only one principle. More particularly, in the field of the so-called "experimental philosophy of the human mind", his doctrines "formed the greatest step ever made in the science of Mind by a single individual". Many of his reflections now appear obvious to us, especially after we have become acquainted with Locke's thought, but "what a contrast do they exhibit, not only to the discussions of the schoolmen, but to the analogical theories of Hobbes at the very same period" (pp. 122–123).

"The glory, however", underlines Stewart, "of having pointed out to his successors the true method of studying the theory of Mind, is almost all that can be claimed by Descartes in logical and metaphysical science". Indeed, in other respects, his doctrines are totally unacceptable. "Among the principal articles of the Cartesian philosophy, which are now incorporated with our prevailing and most accredited doctrines", Stewart mentions the following: the clear exposition of that "common logical error of attempting to define words which express notions too simple to admit of analysis", the classification of numerous prejudices (especially "a careless use of language as the instrument of thought"), the stress laid on the evidence of consciousness in the instances of reasoning which concern the human mind, and, finally, the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, which is regarded as "the most important, however, of all his improvements in metaphysics". Stewart is careful to ascribe to Descartes many doctrines that eighteenth-century metaphysicians were inclined to state as their own, and he gives a detailed account of the lengthy dispute over the secondary qualities and who was the first to negate their existence (pp. 124–125). The assertion of the Cartesian principle that "nothing conceivable by the power of imagination could throw any light on the operations of thought", Stewart concludes, constitutes the origin of the true philosophy of mind, hence Descartes can be justly considered as "the father of genuine metaphysics" (pp. 136–138).

Pierre Gassendi represents "among the opponents of Descartes [...] one of the earliest, and by far the most formidable [...]". The comparative justness of Gassendi's views in natural philosophy, may partly, perhaps chiefly, be ascribed to his diligent study of Bacon's works which (if he ever read them) he has nowhere alluded to in his writings" (pp. 141–142). Gassendi's learning was "at once vast and accurate; and, as a philosopher, he is justly entitled to the praise of being one of the first who entered thoroughly into the spirit of the Baconian logic. But his inventive powers, which were probably not of the highest order, seem to have been either dissipated amidst the multiplicity of his literary pursuits, or laid asleep by his indefatigable labours, as a Commentator and a Compiler". The substance of his thought could be described in a few pages; instead we have to pursue it through no less than six huge *in folio* volumes (pp. 148–149).

Malebranche's merit in philosophy lies both in his activity as a commentator on Descartes' writings, and as an author of new philosophical conclusions, albeit inferred from the principles of his master. As to the former, Stewart has a high regard for his elucidations concerning the Cartesian theory of vision; as to the latter, he believes that the concept of the occasional causes "has, indeed, anticipated Hume in some of the most ingenious reasonings contained in his *Essay on Necessary Connexion*" (p. 157). In addition, Malebranche's doctrines show interesting analogies with Berkeley's doctrines, or even with certain teachings of Hindu philosophy (pp. 160–161). Pascal is certainly a famous and highly-regarded figure in the modern age, but his writings, Stewart observes, provide "few materials for philosophical history". It is possible that his *Lettres provinciales* attracted "the attention of philosophers" at least because "they present so faithful and lively a picture of the influence of false religious views in perverting the moral sentiments of mankind". But Pascal's genius manifests itself more frequently in "unconnected" reflections, at times extremely brilliant or even sublime, but more often erroneous or immature. As for Fénelon, Stewart observes that "the reputation of Fénelon as a philosopher would probably have been higher and more universal than it is, if he had not added to the depth, comprehension, and soundness of his judgment, so rich a variety of those more pleasing and attractive qualities, which are commonly regarded rather as the flowers than the fruits of study" (pp. 165–167).

In the first half of the seventeenth century, the philosophical landscape of the rest of Europe was desolate: "the philosophical spirit which had arisen with such happy auspices in England and in France, has left behind it few or no traces of its existence in the rest of Europe [. . .]. On all questions connected with the science of mind (a phrase which I here use in its largest acceptation) authority continued to be everywhere mistaken for argument" (p. 170). Stewart limits himself to an open appreciation of Hugo Grotius and Montesquieu alone. What brings them together is the link between historical and juridical problems, a connection of particular interest to the English culture of the time. It is in Grotius, above all, that we find the origin of the idea that juridical rules arise among human beings before they gather in social institutions but still live in a state of nature. The assumption that there exists a natural law in accordance with human nature also led to the elaboration of a completely natural morality. In reality, Grotius can only be considered a "precursor" to these ideas; hence, precisely in order to show their future development, Stewart does not hesitate to "abandon for a moment the order of time" and examine Montesquieu's doctrines: "The main object of the *Spirit of Laws* is to show, not, as has been frequently supposed, what laws *ought* to be, but how the diversities in the physical and moral circumstances of the human race have contributed to produce diversities in their political establishments, and in their municipal regulations". To this end, "he combined the science of law with the history of political society". He did not limit himself to doing so for law and the history of Rome, but was "convinced that the general principles of human nature are everywhere the same", and he therefore looked for new information within each form of government and among the inhabitants of all sorts of environments (pp. 189 and 191). By strongly appealing to philosophers to abandon excessively abstract and useless theories and turn to



the profitable undertaking of merging history, philosophy, and jurisprudence, he made great innovations to the culture of his time. By contrast, in Italy and Spain, except for the experimental interests cultivated by the followers of Galileo and the novel by Cervantes, “the prospect seems not merely sterile, but afflicting and almost hopeless” (p. 194).

The second part of the *Dissertation* embraces the development of philosophy in the eighteenth century, from Locke to the Scottish common sense philosophers, with a few words on Kant and the early idealists. Since literary relations between nations were still rather limited in the seventeenth century, Stewart believes it appropriate to deal with the progress of philosophy in the different nations separately, notably in England, France, and Germany. But, “from the era at which we are now arrived the *Republic of Letters* may be justly understood to comprehend, not only these and other countries in their neighbourhood, but every region of the civilized earth. Disregarding all diversities of language and of geographical situation, I shall direct my attention to the intellectual progress of the species in general [ . . . ]”. Hence from now on the treatment is no longer subdivided according to geographic areas, but to the (metaphysical, ethical, and political) problems discussed. Greater space is given over to Locke and Leibniz, because their doctrines are useful preparatory reading for the thought of contemporary metaphysicians (pp. 203–204).

Stewart begins with an extensive discussion devoted to Locke, whose main work, the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, marks “a new era in the history of philosophy”, because “without a precise idea of his distinguishing tenets, it is impossible to form a just estimate, either of the merits or demerits of his successors” (p. 205). Stewart’s account begins with a detailed description of Locke’s education, from his medical studies, which, even though his philosophical works contain no mention of them, were to prove the best preparation for the study of the mind – at least as regards the specific form of analysis he conducted. Stewart then moves on to an examination of Locke’s major works, pointing out the historical circumstances in which they were written and describing in particular the opportunities and psychological motives which led the author to his object of research. The structure of each work is thoroughly examined and hypotheses are formulated concerning the order followed in their writing. This detailed analysis is of great importance because, in the case at issue, it shows that Locke wrote discontinuously and this accounts for the inconsistencies, fluctuations, and repetitions present in his writings. According to Stewart, however, “the inconsistencies, if duly reflected on, would be found rather apparent than real”, because, he believes, even the propositions which may seem contradictory contain “a mixture of truth, and [ . . . ] the error lies chiefly in the unqualified manner in which the truth is stated” (p. 211).

When inconsistencies or even evident contradictions appear in the works of eminent philosophers, Stewart advises the reader “carefully and candidly to collate the questionable passages; and to study so to reconcile them by judicious modifications and corrections, as to render the oversights and mistakes of our illustrious guides subservient to the precision and soundness of our own conclusions”. Stewart acknowledges that, in Locke’s case, this is a difficult task because one would have to collate propositions from quite different contexts. On the other hand, as Locke

himself admitted, his work was written “by snatches”, and so one cannot expect the exactness and orderly arrangement proper to a systematic treatise. For the same reason, it is not easy to identify the sources of his thought, since he seems to merge diverse material, most of which is of an occasional character. He had certainly made a thorough study of Hobbes, Gassendi, Bacon, Malebranche, and Montaigne. We may also assume that he was fairly well-acquainted with Descartes’ philosophy since he strongly criticizes it; and yet, the names of these philosophers are rarely cited in his works. “It is probable that, when he sat down to write, he found the result of his youthful reading so completely identified with the fruits of his subsequent reflections, that it was impossible for him to attempt a separation of the one from the other; and that he was thus occasionally led to mistake the treasures of memory for those of invention” (pp. 211–213).

Locke’s style deserves particular attention because it is the style of a cultured man rather than that of a secluded and isolated scholar: “It everywhere abounds with colloquial expressions, which he had probably caught by the ear from those whom he considered as models of good conversation”; for this reason it is greatly appreciated not only in the realm of the sciences and in academic debates, but also in business and in society life. The wide circulation of his work (four editions in ten years) attests precisely to the ‘popular’ nature of his philosophy (pp. 214–215). Hence, it is not surprising that his work met with much hostility in Oxford and that he aroused much concern by his courage in promoting attitudes of freedom, both in civil and religious life, and, similarly, that there was an apparent coincidence between some of his moral doctrines and those enounced by Hobbes. Less understandable is the opposition of some to his logic, which, quite to the contrary, can be considered the most valuable part of his whole production. In any case, both he and his work were the object of a sort of idolatry among Cambridge students, and these fanatic pupils were responsible for some of the excesses that mark his doctrines. It was in Scotland that Locke’s philosophy was particularly well received, although this enthusiasm was tempered by awareness of the errors or limits inherent in his thought. In effect it was in Scotland that mutual influences between the philosophy of Locke and Descartes developed, which was very helpful in amending the exaggerations and errors present in both. The circulation of Locke’s work on the Continent was equally significant. Although the diffusion of his doctrines in France is not easy to document, it is certain that, by reason of their similarity and affinity with those of Gassendi, they found a particularly receptive environment there. Coste’s accurate translation of the *Essay* contributed enormously to the success enjoyed by the work. The work was equally successful in Germany (Leibniz’s high esteem and appreciation of Locke is well-known) and Switzerland (suffice it to mention de Crousaz) (pp. 216–223).

Although it contradicts the spirit underlying Locke’s work, Stewart applies himself to establishing the fundamental doctrines of his thought, which, in his view, are twofold: the origin of our ideas; and the nature of moral sentiment and the inalterability of moral distinctions. It is precisely on these two points that Locke’s thought has been grossly misunderstood by several of his followers as well as by his opponents. As regards the first point, Locke’s thought has often been erroneously

confused with the doctrines of Gassendi, Diderot, and Horne Tooke. These authors, seen in a general perspective, maintain that knowledge derives uniquely from the senses. If this had been Locke's position too, according to Stewart, he would have gone no farther than Gassendi. Even though there are several passages in Locke's work which may have allowed this interpretation, it is certain that he also admitted a second "source" from which knowledge flows, namely "reflection" (p. 233). Leibniz's criticism of the supporters of the principle *nichil est in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensu*, and of Locke in particular, adding to it the famous words *nisi ipse intellectus*, is certainly very astute, but it remains unclear why it should be considered an objection if it is aimed at an author like Locke, who greatly emphasized the importance of reflection as the source of a whole set of ideas. Rather, it epigrammatically expresses Locke's own thought. Stewart concludes his analysis of this problem insisting, from a methodological viewpoint, on the need to examine the texts written by philosophers with a deeply philosophical understanding in order to avoid incomprehension and misinterpretation of their thought, and above all to avoid the mistake, common to a number of commentators and expounders, of copying one another (pp. 235–237).

The second theme underlying Locke's thought, his moral doctrine, has been distorted to an equal extent. Precisely due to his overt hostility to innate ideas, Locke's doctrine has been understood as an assertion of the conventional character of truth and virtue. This may be the impression one draws from reading the first book of the *Essay*, but it certainly does not correspond to Locke's real intention. Stewart endeavours to demonstrate the contrary, firstly by providing additional passages which allow us to bring the situation into balance at least, and then, in the footnotes and final documentation above all, by providing all the indirect evidence (biographical anecdotes, private letters, etc.) which convey a different image of Locke (note that special importance is given to an unpublished letter written by Newton and to Locke's relevant answer) (pp. 238–246).

The conclusive part of the discussion on Locke is devoted "to taking notice of one or two defects in his intellectual character, which exhibit a strong contrast to the general vigour of his mental powers". The first defect consists in "the facility with which he listens to historical evidence, when it happens to favour his own conclusions" (he believes a curious story about a rational and intelligent parrot, for example)". "The disrespect [...] for the wisdom of antiquity" is the second defect; in fact, it is a prejudice which conditions his investigation. This irreverence cannot be justified as a reaction against the excessively high esteem accorded to the ancients by his contemporaries and predecessors. It is certainly related to Locke's contempt for the study of eloquence, as is apparent when he asserts that someone called Blackmore was the greatest English poet. Locke's coarse temperament, which was certainly the cause of his insensitivity to poetry and eloquence, appears to ensue from the excessively austere, or inflexible, education he received as a youth. Traces of this education are also visible in some of the maxims he wrote in his treatise on education (pp. 247–249).

The section devoted to Leibniz, although lengthy and divided into different parts, is in some respects a continuation of the treatment devoted to Locke,

since it contains numerous comparisons and references to him. In the first place, Leibniz seems to have represented for continental European philosophy what Locke represented for England: “the circumstance which chiefly induced me to assign to Leibnitz so prominent a place in this historical sketch, is the extraordinary influence of his industry and zeal in uniting, by a mutual communication of intellectual lights and of moral sympathies, the most powerful and leading minds scattered over Christendom; [...] from this time forward, accordingly, the history of philosophy involves, in a far greater degree than at any former period, the general history of the human mind [...]” (pp. 252–253). What is fundamental in Leibniz’s philosophy is his partaking of a kind of Platonism which induced him to elaborate some “mystical speculations”, in clear contrast to Locke’s inquiries.<sup>20</sup> This contrast was to continue to characterize the philosophical research conducted in England and Germany during the following centuries. Leibniz’s optimism, deriving from his well-known doctrine of established harmony, “was, in some essential respects, peculiar to himself”: “It differed from that of Plato, and that of some other sages of antiquity, in considering the human mind in the light of a *spiritual machine*, and, of consequence, in positively denying the freedom of human actions”. As a consequence, this optimism brought about “the annihilation of all moral distinctions” (pp. 259–261). This kind of optimism merges the most elevated mysticism with extreme scepticism, with easily predictable results: “the influence of his example appears to me to have contributed much to corrupt the taste and to bewilder the speculations of his countrymen; giving birth in the last result, to that heterogeneous combination of all that is pernicious in Spinozism, with the transcendental eccentricities of a heated and exalted fancy, which, for many years past, has so deeply tinctured both their philosophy and their works of fiction” (p. 266).

Stewart also discusses the principle of sufficient reason and the principle of continuity, giving a number of details, not so much on account of their importance as on account of the disputes they provoked among contemporaries. Both principles are expressed in such an indefinite language that they can be understood in quite different senses. “Whether this vagueness of language was the effect of artifice, or of a real vagueness in the author’s notions”, observes Stewart, it certainly contributed to making them well-known to a broad category of readers, just as was later the case with Kant: “the extraordinary popularity which, in our own times, the philosophy of Kant enjoyed for a few years, among the countrymen of Leibnitz, may, in like manner, be in a great degree ascribed to the imposing aspect of his enigmatical oracles, and to the consequent facility of arguing without end, in defence of a system so transmutable and so elusive in its forms” (p. 273). Concluding his discussion, Stewart again acknowledges the extraordinary cultural role played by Leibniz

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<sup>20</sup>*Dissertation.*, pp. 253–254: “[...] the opinion of Leibnitz concerning the origin of our knowledge [...] although expressed in a different phraseology, [...] agrees in the most essential points with the *innate ideas* of the Cartesians; but it approaches still more nearly to some of the mystical speculations of Plato. The very exact coincidence between the language of Leibnitz on this question, and that of his contemporary Cudworth, whose mind, like his own, was deeply tinctured with the Platonic Metaphysics, is not unworthy of notice here, as an historical fact”.

("[...] I am almost tempted to retract part of what I have written, when I reflect on the benefits which the world has derived even from the errors of Leibnitz"), and he reiterates that "the best *éloge* of Leibnitz is furnished by the literary history of the 18th century", which attests the extent to which his teaching accelerated the progress of knowledge (p. 286).

Stewart's presentation continues with a discussion of the necessitarianism of Newton, Clarke, Spinoza, Collins, and Jonathan Edwards. In these discussions, he is not so much concerned with a "strict order of chronology" as with an exhaustive treatment of the problem and the various analogies and references it involves (p. 313). An example of this method is the joint treatment of Bayle and Fontenelle, even though Fontenelle lived until beyond the mid-eighteenth century: "I class them together on account of the mighty influence of both on the literary taste of their contemporaries; an influence in neither case founded on any claims to original genius, or to important improvements, but on the attractions which they possessed in common, though in very different ways, as popular writers; and on the easy and agreeable access which their works opened to the opinions and speculations of the learned [...] but my chief reason for connecting Fontenelle rather with the contemporaries of his youth than with those of his old age, is, that during the latter part of his life he was left far behind in his philosophical creed (for he never renounced his faith as a Cartesian) by those very pupils to whose minds he had given so powerful an impulse, and whom he had so long taught by his example the art (till then unknown in modern times) of blending the truths of the severer sciences with the lights and graces of eloquence" (pp. 324–325). In England, a similar tendency is expressed by Addison, who can be credited with "recommending the most serious and important truths by the united attractions of wit, humour, imagination, and eloquence" (p. 333).

Berkeley was greatly influenced by the literary taste of his time but, thanks to his "logical acuteness and invention", he was the writer who made the most important contribution to metaphysics after Locke. His close friendships with Addison, Pope, and Swift firmly attest to his familiarity with the literary life of his time. Indeed it was his inclination to connect "philosophy and fines arts" that enabled metaphysical research to enjoy a "popularity and fashion [...]" which they had never before acquired in England" (pp. 338–339). If we exclude some strange paradoxes, his main contribution was his new theory of vision, even though the originality of this theory cannot be attributed to him alone, since it is certain that "the progress of the human mind has been gradual". For this reason, Stewart conscientiously collects the contributions made to this theory by the thinkers preceding Berkeley, notably by Alhazen, a twelfth-century Arab scientist, and Malebranche, with the purpose of completing the "historical chain" of this doctrine (pp. 343–348).

Before discussing the major metaphysical doctrines which were developed in the eighteenth century, Stewart briefly reviews the philosophy of two thinkers, one Scottish and the other French: namely Hartley and Condillac, who "have attempted to modify [their] fundamental principles in a manner totally inconsistent with the views of their master [Locke]". As to the former, Stewart mentions "Hartley's school" and makes it clear that although this thinker should not be regarded as "the

first author of any of the theories commonly ascribed to him, (the seeds of all of them having been previously sown in the university where he was educated) it was nevertheless reserved for him to combine them together, and to exhibit them to the world in the imposing form of a system". Charles Bonnet is directly associated with Hartley, because they both maintain similar doctrines for explaining the relationship between body and soul by means of vibrations as well as those related to a number of theological questions. Other thinkers belonging to this 'school' are Law, (who seems to have suggested to Hartley the "possibility of accounting for all our intellectual pleasures and pains"), Paley, and above all Priestley (pp. 351–353).

Condillac made great use of Locke's method in studying phenomena, and many of his doctrines are similar to those elaborated by Hartley and Bonnet. But, above all, it should be observed that "all of the three, while they profess the highest veneration for Locke, have abandoned his account of the origin of our ideas for that of Gassendi; and by doing so have, with the best intentions, furnished arms against those principles which it was their common aim to establish in the world". In France, the negative influence exerted by Condillac on the diffusion of this erroneous interpretation of Locke's thought was enormous, and still today it represents the main source of the aversion of the Scottish thinkers towards French philosophy. In truth, in the "apparent simplification and generalization of Locke's doctrine" carried out by Condillac "there is, it must be acknowledged, something, at first sight, extremely seducing". "The clearness and simplicity of Condillac's style", continues Stewart, "add to the force of this illusion, and flatter the reader with an agreeable idea of the powers of his own understanding, when he finds himself so easily conducted through the darkest labyrinths of metaphysical science. It is to this cause I would chiefly ascribe the great popularity of his works [. . .]. They may be read with as little exertion of thought as a history or a novel; and it is only when we shut the book, and attempt to express in our own words the substance of what we have gained, that we have the mortification to see our supposed acquisitions vanish into air [. . .]. The best part of his works", he concludes, "relates to the action and reaction of thought and language on each other, a subject which had been previously very profoundly treated by Locke, but which Condillac has had the merit of placing in many new and happy points of view". Condillac can also take credit for having long meditated on "the origin and the theoretical history of language" before Adam Smith and Rousseau; his speculations are often novel and curious; they are "enlivened with a mixture of historical illustration, and of critical discussion, seldom to be met with among metaphysical writers" (pp. 359–366).

Mention is also made in the works of Buffon, Helvétius, Grimm, Diderot, and others, who all contributed to develop some aspects of the philosophical problems which were significant at their time, although they did not dedicate themselves entirely to metaphysical speculation. To tell the truth, concludes Stewart, "the most valuable additions made by French writers to the Philosophy of the Human Mind are to be found, not in their systematical treatises on metaphysics, but in those more popular compositions, which, professing to paint the prevailing manners of the times, touch occasionally on the varieties of intellectual character. In this most interesting and important study, which has been hitherto almost entirely neglected

in Great Britain France must be allowed not only to have led the way, but to remain still unrivalled" (pp. 382–383). Stewart explicitly cites Vauvenargues, Duclos, and even Helvétius, though he had strongly criticized him in other respects.

Stewart ends his judgement on eighteenth-century French culture with the following more general reflections: "the influence, however, of the philosophical spirit on the general habits of thinking among men of letters in France, was in no instance displayed to greater advantage, than in the numerous examples of theoretical or conjectural history, which appeared about the middle of last century [. . .]. I have already mentioned the attempts of Condillac and others, to trace upon this plan the first steps of the human mind in the invention of language [. . .]. The same sort of speculation has been applied with greater success to the mechanical and other necessary arts of civilized life and still more ingeniously and happily to the different branches of pure and mixed mathematics [. . .]. To a philosophical mind, no study certainly can be more delightful than this species of history; but as an organ of instruction, I am not disposed to estimate its practical utility so highly as D'Alembert [. . .]. It does not seem to me at all adapted to interest the curiosity of novices: nor is it so well calculated to engage the attention of those who wish to enlarge their scientific knowledge, as of persons accustomed to reflect on the phenomena and laws of the intellectual world [. . .]. At present I shall only remark the common relation in which all such researches stand to the Philosophy of the Human Mind, and their common tendency to expand and to liberalize the views of those who are occupied in the more confined pursuits of the subordinate sciences". These tendencies in French culture, Stewart observes finally, are more than enough to explain why "Leibniz's mystical and spiritual system" has never penetrated that country's philosophy in depth (pp. 384–385).

In conclusion to his *Dissertation*, Stewart presents the philosophy of Kant and the German thinkers who preceded him as well as the directions of thought within the Scottish common sense philosophy. The reader is thus confronted with a strange chronological reversal in which Kant comes before Hume. This reversal is not explicitly justified, but its grounds can be easily explained. First of all, according to Stewart, German philosophy of this age, notably that of Kant, has not contributed in any way to the progress of the philosophical discipline itself; on the contrary, it seems to have ineluctably lost its way, as confirmed by the doctrines of the early idealists; furthermore, in Stewart's eyes, only Scottish philosophy continues to manifest itself as a unitary body of doctrines still actively operating. The lasting success enjoyed by Leibniz's philosophy in Germany can only be attributed "to the zeal and ability with which it was taught in that part of Europe, for nearly half a century, by his disciple Wolff, a man of little genius, originality, or taste, but whose extensive and various learning, seconded by a methodical head, and by an incredible industry and perseverance, seems to have been peculiarly fitted to command the admiration of his countrymen" (pp. 389–390). But, in the interval between Wolff and Kant, the only thinker who deserves mention is Lambert, who applied himself above all to the study of mathematics.

The account of Kant's philosophy represents a particular, though highly significant, case within Stewart's methodology. Indeed, Stewart, who did not understand

German, had to rely on second-hand accounts or Latin and French translations. In practice, he used Born's Latin translation, the English account by Willich and Nitsch, the account by Reinhold translated into Latin, and some general histories of philosophy (that written by Buhle, which had been translated into French, and the one by Degérando, who was his friend), in addition to the relevant entry in the *Biographie universelle*. Stewart frequently quotes passages from Kant directly in Latin, in contrast to his usual practice of providing English translations of the passages he quotes, but then, in order to make them comprehensible, he has to use explanations taken from other authors. Following the translations available to him and the commentaries elaborated by the authors he refers to, he attempts to present Kant's philosophy, but this endeavour proves impracticable and he soon abandons his account and devotes his efforts to critical observations. His first criticism is aimed precisely at the authors of the various accounts. When treating Kant's peculiar "discoveries", none of them ever mentioned Cudworth, and more particularly his *Eternal and Immutable Morality*, a book which was certainly known in German cultural circles thanks to an excellent translation. By comparing numerous passages from Kant and Cudworth, Stewart identifies close similarities both in regard to concepts and terminology. He even holds Cudworth to be greater than Kant, although he does not always agree with his doctrines: "[Cudworth] seems to have advanced at least as far as Kant, in drawing the line between the provinces of the senses and of the understanding; and although not one of the most luminous of our English writers, he must be allowed to be far superior to the German metaphysician, both in point of perspicuity and of precision" (pp. 398–400).

But there was another thinker in the United Kingdom who had formulated the same epistemological doctrines as Kant but at a much earlier date, namely Price, "a zealous follower both of Plato and of Cudworth". Stewart concludes, therefore, that Kant's philosophy can be considered new in Germany, but not in the United Kingdom. In any case, he doubts whether Kant's method has brought about any progress, for example, in the sphere of what in Germany is called "philosophy of sensation"; indeed, in order to attain this end it would have been necessary "to trace, with some degree of systematical detail, the origin of our most important simple notions; and for this purpose it seemed reasonable to begin with an analytical view of those faculties and powers, to the exercise of which the development of these notions is necessarily subsequent. It is thus that the simple notions of time and motion presuppose the exercise of the faculty of memory; and that the simple notions of truth, of belief, of doubt, and many others of the same kind, necessarily presuppose the exercise of the power of reasoning". Stewart concludes, therefore, that German thinkers did not make any progress in the "anatomy of the mind"; by contrast, it is certain that considerable progress was made in Scotland, for example by Reid and his followers (among whom Stewart himself is to be reckoned) (pp. 400–401).

It is undeniable, however, that Stewart has difficulty in presenting Kant's thought, both because of Kant's obscure way of expressing himself, and because of the distortions introduced by his interpreters and expounders. In this regard, he declares himself astonished by the fact that the Kantians never reply to objections



theoretically but limit themselves to discussing the correct interpretation of the thought of their master, and yet it is impossible to find two of them agreeing on this "correct interpretation" (pp. 416–417). In any case, in Stewart's eyes, there is no originality in Kant, and certainly not in his alleged superiority to Hume, because, for Stewart, there had been many thinkers in the United Kingdom who had objected to Hume by remarking that "the understanding is itself a source of new ideas". On this point, he claims he could cite numerous writers from the second half of the eighteenth century, but ironically prefers to "produce a passage from a much older author [Cudworth], whose mode of thinking and writing may perhaps be more agreeable to the taste of Kant's countrymen than the simplicity and precision aimed at by the disciples of Locke" (p. 405). Indeed, Stewart declares himself unable to see what Kant has added to the arguments and criticisms that Scottish thinkers had already aimed at Hume. At most, Kant's position may be compared to the much earlier position of Cudworth and to the objections that the latter had raised against Hobbes and Gassendi over a hundred years earlier (pp. 405–406).

One aspect of Kant's system which draws Stewart's attention is "the concatenation which exists between the most remote and seemingly the most unconnected parts of his system". Would anyone think that Kant's considerations on time and space – "the most abstract and the most controverted of any in the whole compass of metaphysics" – can answer the most urgent questions concerning human freedom? In Stewart's eyes, this is so extraordinary that, in order to satisfy the curiosity of his readers, he presents a few steps in this sequence. In fact, he believes that "it is impossible to combine together these two parts of the Kantian system" (pure reason and practical reason), without making serious mistakes as regards the conception of freedom, the first of which is a sort of extremely "uncomfortable scepticism". Yet, one cannot say that this was the intention of Kant, who actually "began with a serious wish to refute the doctrines of Hume", but in the later course of his research encountered difficulties he was not totally aware of. His recourse to practical reason clearly appears to be an "after-thought" with the aim of overcoming previous difficulties. In support of this argument, Stewart cites the opinions of Reinhold, Degérando, and others (pp. 408, 411, and 413).

If this is the case, asks Stewart, why did Kant's system become so fashionable at a certain point, albeit for a short time? And here Stewart quotes long passages from Degérando, Prévost, and De Bonald, all rather critical of Kant's thought. Together with Prévost, he maintains that the success of Kantian philosophy essentially depends upon the uniformity of all the components of the system, despite some obscure and abstruse features. In any case, concludes Stewart, there are no more pure Kantians, but many half-Kantians and anti-Kantians. For Stewart, "after all, the metaphysics of Kant is well entitled to attention as an article of Philosophical History" because "if it has thrown no new light on the laws of the intellectual world, the unbounded popularity which it enjoyed for some years in Germany has placed in a new and striking point of view one of the most extraordinary varieties of national character which Europe has exhibited in the 18th century" and, all things considered, it will enable posterity to develop an idea of the mentality of its admirers with more exactitude than Gall and Spurzheim's studies of skulls (p. 417).

Among the various schools that derived from Kant, Stewart briefly mentions those of Fichte and Schelling. He openly acknowledges that he can only provide a brief outline taken from the indirect accounts he has read and not from any direct knowledge of them. Indeed, his presentation and the relevant judgements derive almost exclusively from Degérando's *Histoire comparée*. Among Kant's opponents – again following Degérando – Stewart briefly mentions Jacobi and Reinhold, but he can only claim a personal knowledge of the writings of Meiners and Herder, which he praises unreservedly but cannot treat extensively because they are not directly connected with the history of metaphysics. Before concluding this section, Stewart quickly glances at Italy, devoting a few words to Gerdil, Genovesi, Gigli, and Soave; at the New World, mentioning Jonathan Edwards; and at India, on account of the deep interest that William Jones' studies on Hindu thought had aroused in him (pp. 418 and 421–427).

The last section of the *Dissertation* is devoted to the Scottish thinkers. For Stewart, the revival of metaphysical thought in Scotland must be traced back to Hutcheson and Baxter in the early eighteenth century. But this initial resurgence found the right way to a positive requalification in Hume's research into the human intellect, since "it forms [...] a very important link in this Historical Sketch, as it has contributed, either directly or indirectly, more than any other single work, to the subsequent progress of the Philosophy of the Human Mind" (pp. 427–431). Although the *Treatise of Human Nature* was not initially accepted by the public, inducing Hume to present his thought in the form of *Essays*, it nevertheless manifests its author's talent in metaphysics and the connections of his thought with that of his predecessors better than any other of his works. In any case, it was his plan to study human nature which gave rise to the great amount of literature developing in Scotland in a variety of related fields: from philosophy to history, from jurisprudence to politics, and from anthropology to linguistics. Hume's influence was broad and profound, not only because of the content of his philosophical speculations, but also, "in no inconsiderable degree", because of the "purity, polish, and precision of his diction style he used to deal with them". Even his opponents, who vigorously attacked him for his metaphysical principles, could not help being influenced by his style, which therefore became the patrimony of all Scottish thinkers and can be defined as "the critical eye with which they were led to canvass a work, equally distinguished by the depth of its reasonings, and by the attractive form in which they are exhibited" (pp. 435–436).

Resting on his own method of drawing comparisons and referring to the doctrines of others, Stewart tries to determine what it is that is unique to Hume: "His aim is to establish a universal scepticism, and to produce in the reader a complete distrust in his own faculties". However, this harmful tendency was largely compensated for by the importance of the progress that resulted from it. Hume's principles are no different from those of Gassendi, Descartes, and Locke, but his conclusions, although justifiably reached, are "so extravagant and dangerous" that he should have immediately perceived the fallaciousness of his data. In any case, what is most valued in Hume's conclusions is the great power of dissuasion with regard to certain points arising from excessive rationalism (Spinoza). It is certain that Hume's

arguments contain "logical quibbles", and some of his premises are simply false. (pp. 437–439). On the other hand, any correct analysis of his thought should try to determine the fundamental tendency of his arguments, rather than linger over particular aspects. To this end, it may be useful, and sometimes even necessary, to turn to extra-philosophical documentation, such as private letters, confidences, personal comments, etc. (pp. 447–449). For this reason, Stewart quotes several passages from letters he judges to be important or merely surprising, in order to elucidate the aims that Hume set for himself with his scepticism. He naturally believes that the task of the historian is to interpret these documents with "critical strictures". Hume's sceptical method, which Stewart is not willing to follow, has the great merit of clarifying definitively the nature of the principle of causality by resolving it into the uniformity of the laws of nature. As regards this fundamental theme, Stewart is convinced that "the only difference which seems to remain among philosophers is, whether it can be explained, as Mr. Hume imagined, by means of the association of ideas; or whether it must be considered as an original and fundamental law of the human understanding" (pp. 445–446).

The treatment of Hume is immediately followed by that of Butler, who not only lived before Hume, but also had little to do with the metaphysical questions Hume addressed. Yet Stewart is impressed by the fact that Butler wrote a short essay on personal identity, and from this he concludes that if it had been published a few years later "nobody would have doubted, that it had been directly pointed at the general strain and spirit of Mr. Hume's philosophy" (pp. 454–455). The treatment then deals with the other Scots, presenting in particular the thought of Thomas Reid, who had been Stewart's professor for a long time and whose work Stewart largely regards himself as continuing, even though he criticises some particular aspects of his doctrines. Stewart had already devoted one of the *Accounts* to a critical exposition of Reid's philosophy, and he now limits himself to an overall evaluation of the merit of Reid's doctrines, referring the reader to his previous work for a more detailed analysis. The *Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid* is not only a scholarly commemoration of the Scottish thinker, but also an opportunity to define and justify the so-called "philosophy of common sense" from a historiographical point of view. In general usage, "the phrase 'common sense' is nearly synonymous with *Mother-wit* denoting that degree of sagacity (depending partly on original capacity, and partly on personal experience and observation) which qualifies an individual for those simple and essential occupations which all men are called on to exercise habitually by their common nature. In this acceptation, it is opposed to those mental acquirements which are derived from a regular education and from the study of books; and refers, not to the speculative convictions of the understanding, but to that prudence and discretion which are the foundation of successful conduct" (*Account* [...] *of Th. Reid*, in *Collected Works*, X, p. 306). At times Reid seems to depart from this conception of philosophy, above all when he cites too many "principles of common sense". Nevertheless, Stewart believes that the sense of his philosophical inquiry is perfectly consistent with the previous description of the philosophy of common sense and he prefers to interpret Reid's "principles" as "fundamental laws of human belief", such as 'I am the same person to-day as

yesterday', 'the material world has an existence independent of that of percipient beings', etc., that is to say laws that are proper to any man but only the philosopher formulates explicitly (p. 304).

Finally, Stewart examines a number of aspects which still need to be addressed by the Scottish thinkers: (i) a textbook of rational logic is indispensable for the systemization of the various doctrines which have been proposed in recent times; (ii) the theory of evidence needs to be developed further to achieve practical results in the field of the moral and political disciplines as well; and (iii) the metaphysical implications of the calculation of probability should be determined to avoid a number of paralogisms in the sphere of ethics above all. For Stewart, these were the most urgent philosophical problems, and he is certain that "should such men as Hume, Smith, and Reid arise again, their curiosity would, in all probability, be turned to some applications of metaphysical principles of a more popular and practical nature than those which chiefly engaged their curiosity" (pp. 466–468).

In his final reflections, Stewart complains about England's isolation from the rest of Europe as a consequence of political events. This situation has certainly curbed the advancement of "true philosophy", but that progress can now continue on a path already clearly indicated, which involves a fruitful alliance between history – or, more generally, experimental knowledge – and "metaphysical" thought. This aspect is by now "obvious and undisputable" and, in the early nineteenth century, it produced positive results in various cultural domains, in poetry, and, on a more general level, in the clarity and linguistic precision of many disciplines, from history and political economy to the moral and physical sciences. We can optimistically conclude, therefore, that: "the swelling of the buds [ . . . ] affords sufficient proof that the roots are sound, and encourages the hope that the growth of the trunk, though more slow, will, in process of time, be equally conspicuous with that of the leaves and blossoms" (p. 483).

**7.4.4.4** Stewart's *Dissertation* is a very clear example of philosophical history applied to the history of philosophical thought. Like the historians, he only considers the great philosophical movements and the great thinkers of the two last centuries, with the purpose of describing the progress made in the philosophical disciplines. In drawing up this survey, he devotes himself on one hand to a systematic explanation of those concepts of the past which have revealed a decisive influence on the elaboration of current doctrines, above all in the perspective of a 'Philosophy of Mind', and on the other, he is concerned to collect all those philosophical manifestations which, at various times and in various places in the civilized world, have appeared to be an expression of a unique human nature. Within this perspective, the history of philosophy becomes a chapter of the history of man in civilized society and, just as in many other philosophical histories (of society, historical and political events, the sciences, geographic discoveries, etc.), it contributes to our understanding of the destiny of the human species.

From the philosophical historians, in particular Robertson, Stewart has learnt not to weigh down his account with erudite documentation (such as dates, titles of works, circumstances surrounding the life, etc.): he places this information in

the footnotes and especially in the final ‘Notes and Illustrations’. “The original sources”, he asserts in this regard, “have long convinced me of the propriety, on such occasions, of bringing under the eye of the reader, the specific authorities on which my statements proceed”, because “without such a check, the most faithful historian is perpetually liable to the suspicion of accommodating facts to his favourite theories; or of unconsciously blending with the opinions he ascribes to others, the glosses of his own imagination”. In any case, whether these digressions are biographical or historical, the intention behind them is never purely erudite, since they aim “to throw some additional light on the philosophical or the political principles of the individuals to whom they relate” (p. 529). With this method, which was already widespread among the Scottish philosophical historians, Stewart puts forward a coherent and always absorbing account of philosophical knowledge, which represents one of the highest expressions of the historiography of the Scottish Enlightenment.

**7.4.5** The first part of Stewart’s *Dissertation* was the subject of a long, detailed review by James Mackintosh, which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* of September 1816. A review of the second part, again by Mackintosh, appeared in the same journal in October 1821. The two reviews, although temporally distant, can therefore be read jointly. Considering the overt polemic against the concepts held by D’Alembert and Bacon which is contained in Stewart’s introduction to the *Dissertation*, it seems rather paradoxical that the reviewer devotes over ten pages to exalting Bacon. From a historiographical viewpoint, Mackintosh has no doubts about placing Stewart’s treatment within the Baconian tradition (ER, 1816, p. 189). Stewart’s merits are immediately and generously praised, beginning with his style, which is pointed out as an example to be imitated by all authors of philosophical works. “For the first time in our country”, continues the reviewer, “philosophical originality” and “literary stability” are joined in one author. “On the other hand, let us observe that, in this historical dissertation, style is no literary and purposeless tinsel, but is properly chosen and refined so as to bring about adequate comprehension and an inner disposition consonant with a philosophy whose strength lies in a composed and quiet rationality”. Readers are then urged not to linger too long over certain particular qualities of this work, but rather to “warm by the glow of that honest triumph in the advancement of knowledge, and of that assured faith in the final prevalence of truth and justice, which breathe through every page, and give unity and dignity of a moral purpose to the whole of this classical work” (pp. 192–193). Despite his high praise of Stewart’s historical work, Mackintosh feels it necessary to contribute to its improvement by putting forward some proposals. To this end, he makes a number of broad digressions on the following points: the Middle Ages, Machiavelli, and the authors concerned with moral philosophy.

Mackintosh observes that, although an author may legitimately start a historical text from the period he deems to be most appropriate, it is certain that Stewart’s decision to exclude the entire medieval era implied a highly negative judgement on the age as a whole, a judgement which was indeed universally shared by Enlightenment thinkers. Mackintosh vigorously rejects such a vision of the medieval age and

devotes almost ten pages of his review to explaining, at least in outline, the reasons why even an Enlightenment thinker should be interested in the Middle Ages: from the scientific discoveries to the birth of vernacular languages and literatures, from the formation of nation-states and their respective legal systems to the development of an influential philosophy (an absolutely original concept in the English-speaking world). Indeed, it was precisely the “School Philosophy” which was criticised for so long that gave rise to most of the present-day “metaphysical discussions” (p. 199). The school system in which the most brilliant minds of Europe were educated must have strongly influenced the progress of later achievements as well. But Mackintosh’s main concern is to point out how a way of reasoning which is so different from our own can be useful because it “weans the mind from the narrowness incident to those who think constantly in the forms and words of their own time and country” and it “turns reflexion into unaccustomed channels, dispels the illusion of combination of language to which we have been long habituated, and may present a new side of a principle or an opinion which a better mode of philosophizing kept out of new”. These are, Mackintosh concludes, the reasons why we are interested in the reflection of Chinese and Japanese thinkers. How could we then neglect medieval thought, which was the framework in which our ancestors were educated for over three centuries? (pp. 199–200).

In formulating this positive but cursory reappraisal of the Middle Ages, Mackintosh goes beyond a statement of general principles. Indeed, he asserts that reading Thomas Aquinas’s *Secunda Secundae* led him to conclude that “no moralist has stated the nature and grounds of all the common duties of mankind with more fullness and perspicuity”. He does not hesitate to declare, therefore, that Aquinas “is, in truth, a philosopher of the seventeenth century, formed, by some unaccountable combination of causes, in the schools of the thirteenth”, and admits that “we may venture to own, that we have read this work in the nineteenth century with pleasure and advantage”. Ockham too is presented as “a restorer of an independent philosophy in the Middle Ages” (pp. 202–203). Although, in presenting these medieval authors, Mackintosh is indebted to Tennemann, whom he names explicitly, it is astonishing how clearly he perceives the doctrinal continuity (for example, regarding the problem of universals) between Ockham, Hobbes, Berkeley, Hume, Hartley, Condillac, Horne Tooke, and Stewart himself, at a time when a historical study of medieval philosophy had yet to begin.

In his long digression on Machiavelli (over ten pages), the reviewer aims not only to counter the charges of immorality raised against the Italian writer, but is even inclined to recognize in some of his writings “the first attempts in a new science – the philosophy of history” (p. 219). Mackintosh therefore focuses his attention almost exclusively on the moralists and points out the gaps and imprecise information in Stewart’s account, with the unconcealed intention of displaying his own wide competence in this field of philosophy. Montaigne, Grotius, and other secondary authors – mainly English – whom Stewart had merely mentioned, give Mackintosh the opportunity to show the inadequate nature of the *Dissertation*’s treatment of moral philosophy, and the need to undertake a separate treatment of this subject, a task which was actually assigned to him later.

The review of the second part of the *Dissertation* addresses the core of the history of speculative philosophy more directly and places particular emphasis on Stewart’s ability to “distinguish this true progress of philosophy, in which a single step is of unspeakable importance, from those presumptuous and impotent inquiries, to which the vulgar apply the name of metaphysics, and which, in all ages, have rendered that study unacceptable to many wise men” (ER, 1821, p. 221). Thanks to his deep philosophical knowledge and his impartiality, Stewart alone was capable of outlining the development of this discipline. In this review, however, Mackintosh raises two criticisms against Stewart, albeit formulated benevolently: first of all, he reproaches him for presenting the doctrines of contemporary German thinkers without possessing a direct knowledge of them (p. 262); and secondly, he observes quite eloquently that “if Mr. Stewart has any quality which has an unfavourable influence on his mind as an historian of philosophy, perhaps it is that honest and steady adherence to his own principles which renders him incapable of the momentary assumption of the opinions of other men, which is often necessary faithfully to represent, or even perfectly to conceive them” (p. 250).

Stewart’s work was soon translated into French by J.A. Buchon and appeared under the title *Histoire abrégée des sciences métaphysiques, morales et politiques, depuis la renaissance des lettres* (Paris, 1820). Buchon’s translation was prefaced by a long *Discours préliminaire* (about 82 pages) which mainly consisted of a free translation of James Mackintosh’s review. His *Discours*, although lacking originality, had the merit of establishing Stewart’s reputation in France as one of the major historians of philosophy, besides Stanley, Brucker, Tiedemann, Buhle, and Tennemann, and at the same time of giving French scholars the opportunity to develop a more positive interpretation of medieval philosophy, as formulated in Mackintosh’s criticisms. Nevertheless, the reception of Stewart’s work remained linked to that of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and even in Great Britain it was not greatly used for teaching purposes.

**7.4.6 On Stewart’s life:** J. Veitch, ‘Memoir of Dugald Stewart with Selections from his Correspondence’, in *Collected Works*, Vol. X; DNB, 18, pp. 1169–1173; DECBPh, pp. 831–836; G. MacIntyre, *Dugald Stewart: The Pride and Ornament of Scotland* (Brighton, 2003).

On Stewart’s thought: Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric*, pp. 411–437; D.S. Robinson, ‘Dugald Stewart on Hindu Philosophy’, in *The Story of Scottish Philosophy*, ed. D.S. Robinson (Westport, Conn., 1979), pp. 180–189; M. Ferriani, ‘Dugald Stewart e la filosofia della mente umana’, in *Scienza e filosofia scozzese*, pp. 219–287; E. Griffin-Collart, *La philosophie écossaise du sens commun: Thomas Reid et Dugald Stewart* (Bruxelles, 1980); P. Wood, ‘Dugald Stewart and the invention of the Scottish Enlightenment’, in *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in Reinterpretation*, ed. P. Wood (New York 2000), pp. 1–35; M. Brown, ‘Creating a canon: Dugald Stewart’s construction of the Scottish Enlightenment’, *History of Universities*, XVI (2001), pp. 135–154; H. Shinohara, ‘Dugald Stewart at the Final Stage of the Scottish Enlightenment: Natural Jurisprudence, Political Economy and the Science of Politics’, in *The Rise of Political Economy in the*

*Scottish Enlightenment*, T. Sakamoto and H. Tanaka eds (London and New York, 2003), pp. 179–193; K. Haakonssen, ‘Natural Jurisprudence and the Identity of the Scottish Enlightenment’, in *Philosophy and Religion in Enlightenment Britain*, ed. R. Savage (Oxford, 2012), pp. 258–278.

On the reception of his historiographical work: J. Mackintosh, ER, XXVII (1816), pp. 180–244; 36 (1821), pp. 220–267; J.A. Buchon, ‘Discours préliminaire’ to: D. Stewart, *Histoire abrégée des sciences métaphysiques, morales et politiques, depuis la renaissance des lettres* (Paris, 1820), pp. 1–LXXXII; P.B. Wood, ‘The Hagiography of Common Sense: Dugald Stewart’s Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid’, in *Philosophy, Its History and Historiography*, ed. A.J. Holland (Dordrecht-Boston-Lancaster-Tokyo, 1985) pp. 305–322; *Dugald Stewart: His Development in British and European Context*, K. Haakonssen and P. Wood eds, special issue of *History of European Ideas*, XXXVIII (2012), 1, pp. 1–178.

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**Part IV**  
**The Historiography of Philosophy in  
Germany in the Late Enlightenment**

# Chapter 8

## Textbooks After Brucker

Italo Francesco Baldo

### Introduction

The success of Brucker's works on the general history of philosophy was extended in the second half of the eighteenth century by a series of textbooks produced for the universities, higher and lower secondary schools, and technical schools (*Realschulen*). In this way, Brucker emerged from closed erudite and academic circles and was studied at all levels of education. The authors of these textbooks (Formey, Büsching, Steinacher, Cäsar, Stöwe, Gurlitt, and Gmeiner) made use of Brucker's historiographical work by summarising, abridging, and occasionally commenting on it, but always appraising it as a monumental work and an essential point of reference. In this way, they contributed to making Brucker's history of philosophy a classic text for young people's instruction on the history of philosophy.

This "minor" historiographical production is of interest for anyone wishing to know to what extent Brucker was referred to and, at the same time, to see how new tendencies came to be included in textbooks at a time when new forms of research and the formulation of new historiographical theories were just appearing on the horizon. One of the fundamental characteristics of these works was the presence of Wolffian philosophy, which undoubtedly became less important in the German philosophical world in the second half of the eighteenth century, but in no way ceased to be influential, despite certain aspects of Kant's criticism. These textbooks 'celebrated' Wolff as "the German Aristotle", "the Master of Germany", the thinker who had provided philosophy with a systematic form through his elaboration of Leibniz. He represented the point of arrival of the eclectic philosophy

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Brucker had spoken of, and it was he who represented an authentic renewal in the philosophical research that had matured after the revival of the Greek schools during the Renaissance. The textbooks not only contain Wolff's philosophy, but also the philosophical views of the authors themselves; but their views are of little importance and represent particular standpoints that depend on the individual author's specific interests, not on any original theory. It is only in Gurlitt's textbook (*Abriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*) that we can sense signs of some knowledge of the philosophical concepts that were just maturing in Germany, and which were fully expressed in the Romantic period.

What all the works examined here do reveal is their didactic intent, which conditions their approach. We must also add the fact that some of the authors were neither philosophers nor 'professional' historians of philosophy: Büsching was a theologian and an eminent geographer, Gurlitt a philologist, and Stöwe a teacher at a technical school. Those who did work, even academically, in the field of philosophy (Formey, Cäsar, Steinacher and Gmeiner), did not hold any original positions. Formey was an intellectual who focused his attention on several different questions, producing a quite amazing number of works, but who added very little to Wolff's elaboration. Cäsar was simply a scholar who continued the work of the Wolffian J.C. Gottsched in Leipzig, and his history of philosophy is based on that by Meiners, without, however, adding anything particular. He did not agree with Brucker's approach and repeated an opinion that was widespread in post-Bruckerian German historiographical culture, that Brucker did not carry out any research into the "spirit of philosophical systems" (cf. *Betrachtungen*, § 33, p. 41). Due to the vicissitudes of his life and his premature death, Steinacher was not able to develop his thought further, a fact lamented by his contemporaries and friends. Finally, Gmeiner, an Austrian Catholic who at the outset of his academic career dedicated himself to philosophy and historiography, and later turned to jurisprudence and theology repeated Wolff and well-known historiographical interpretations.

In the historiographical field, only Cäsar, Gurlitt and Steinacher made any attempt to expound their own original views, but they, too, ended up being conditioned by the Bruckerian tradition, which thus became their reference point. Formey, Büsching and Stöwe, on the other hand, explicitly stated that they depended on Brucker, indeed they abridged his works, particularly those written for didactic purposes (the *Auszug aus den Kurzten Fragen* and the *Institutiones historiae philosophicae*). Only Büsching revealed a precise and thorough knowledge of Brucker's major work, the *Historia critica*. Gmeiner was different since he based himself on a historiographical concept that preceded Brucker (the *historia litteraria*), but in drawing up his textbook, he partly abridged Brucker's work without taking into consideration the distinction between *historia litteraria* and *historia philosophica*, a distinction that Brucker himself had put forward in the 'Dissertatio praeliminaris' to his *Historia critica*.

The textbooks examined here thus bear witness to the dissemination of Wolffian thought and Bruckerian historiography into the schools. One also has to bear in mind the religious concerns of these writers in the face of the free thought of the Enlightenment: they were not completely adverse to its exponents, whom they

also assimilated through Pietism and “popular philosophy”. The outcome was a cautious optimism regarding science and its progress, but their aim was mainly to educate for religious ends. The problem was to restore the balance between philosophical research and religion, which had been one of the main characteristics of the Reformation since Melancthon and which was also partly shared by the Catholic Steinacher.

These textbooks do not show us the first steps towards a renewal in Frederick’s Germany, but they do tell us about the philosophical and philosophico-historical culture of the schools. We can cite once again the brief textbook by Stöwe (*Versuch einer Geschichte der Philosophie, bloss zum Gebrauch der Schulen*), which demonstrates that even in the technical schools the need was felt for some knowledge of the contents and the history of philosophy. The authors considered here are presented in the chronological order in which their respective manuals were published, from Formey, *Histoire abrégée de la philosophie* (Berlin, 1759) to Gmeiner, *Literaturgeschichte des Ursprungs und Fortganges der Philosophie* (Graz, 1788–1789): it is therefore possible to witness, step by step, a gradual distancing from Wolff and the acquisition of Brucker and the new ideas that were arising and maturing in the history of philosophy.

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## 8.1 Jean-Henry-Samuel Formey (1711–1797)

### *Histoire abrégée de la philosophie*

**8.1.1** Jean-Henri-Samuel Formey was one of the most important representatives of the opposition to the French Enlightenment in Germany. Of French origin but Protestant (Calvinist) upbringing and German education, he was born in Berlin on 31st May, 1711, into a family that had emigrated in 1660 for reasons of religion. He studied theology and philosophy, and was ordained as a minister of the French

Church in Brandenburg, working alongside Philippe Fornaret (1666–1736) and later succeeding him. In 1736 he was called to the French gymnasium in Berlin, where, from 1739, he taught philosophy. In 1742, he began to compile a dictionary of philosophy, and some of his articles were published in the *Encyclopédie* (see above, Sect. 1.1.3). In the meantime (1744), he had been invited by Maupertuis to be the secretary of the philosophy class at the Royal Academy in Berlin; he later became the Academy's official historiographer (cf. *Histoire de l'Académie royale des sciences et belles lettres depuis son origine jusqu'à présent. Avec les pièces originales*, Berlin, 1752) and, from 1748, its permanent secretary. His work at the Academy mainly involved reorganizing the various secretariats, as Maupertuis wished, finally uniting them in a single body. He was a very prolific writer and produced important works, against Rousseau's pedagogical views, for example (*Anti-Émile*, Berlin, 1762; *Émile chrétien*, Berlin, 1764) and against Voltaire, who retaliated by ridiculing Formey's style and denouncing his religious fanaticism. In 1778, he obtained the post of secretary to Princess Henriette Marie of Württemberg and, after her death, represented the Mecklenburg-Schwerin court in Berlin, becoming at the same time head of the philosophy course at the Royal Academy. At the outbreak of the French Revolution, Formey sided with the revolutionaries (*Souvenir d'un citoyen*, Berlin, 1789). He died in Berlin on 7th March, 1797.

**8.1.2** Formey produced almost 600 written works covering a wide range of subjects: philosophy, theology, pedagogy, science, and didactics. The works are mainly in French, but they are nearly all accompanied by a translation into German. Some were highly successful and were translated into various other languages (English, Italian, and Swedish). Here we will only cite those of a philosophical nature, all of which were written and published between 1740 and 1764, the years of Formey's greatest interest in philosophy. Formey professed a moderate form of Wolffism and was to a certain extent influenced by British empiricism. He expounded Wolff's ideas in a popular form in *La belle Wolfienne* (The Hague, 1741–1753, 6 vols; repr. in Ch. Wolff, *Gesammelte Werke*, Part III: *Materialien und Dokumente*, Hildesheim, 1983); and showed his adherence to Wolffian philosophy in his *Elementa philosophiae seu medulla wolffiana* (Berlin, 1747). This was followed by the *Pensées raisonnables apposées aux pensées philosophiques* (Berlin, 1749–1756); *Le philosophe chrétien, ou discours moraux* (Leiden, 1752–1755, 4 vols; in German, Frankfurt, 1753–1759); *Mélanges littéraires et philosophiques* (Berlin, 1754; in German, Berlin, 1755, 2 vols); and the *Mélanges philosophiques* (Leiden, 1759). This last collection was translated into English and printed in London in 1759. The *Histoire abrégée de la philosophie* was published in Leiden by J.H. Schneider in 1759, and was reprinted in Amsterdam in 1760. The *Histoire* was also published in Frankfurt and Leipzig in 1760, translated into German in Berlin in 1763, into English in London in 1766, and in Glasgow in 1767. *Le Philosophe payen, ou Pensées de Pline, avec un commentaire littéraire et moral*, 3 vols, also appeared in Leiden, and in German in Frankfurt and Leipzig in 1761. Finally,

mention must be made of *L'Anti-Sans Soucy, ou la Folie des nouveaux philosophes* (Bouillon, 1761, 2 vols), and the *Principes de morale, déduits de l'usage des facultés de l'entendement humain* (Leiden, 1762, 2 vols).

**8.1.3** In the introduction to his *Histoire*, Formey explains his concept of philosophy. It is “the science of reasons; it tends, in general, to provide a well-founded and intelligible explanation for everything that is and for everything that may be” (*Histoire*, pp. 9–10). Everything knowable, therefore, belongs to philosophy since philosophy establishes the reasons for its existence. “Hence all types of human knowledge, from the moment when they are no longer the simple knowledge of facts but are elevated to the reasons for the facts and discover valid reasons for them, are part of philosophy” (p. 10). The philosophical system is as follows: first logic, that is to say, the formation and development of the intellect, since “it is always necessary to acquire distinct ideas in order to form valid judgements”. We then move on to form the “first principles of certainty, from which descends that of all the truths we discover through them”, or in other words, ontology, as Wolff would express it. At this point, philosophy invites our spirit to consider the world, the soul “placed in the Universe”, and God. Finally, it leads “man back to himself and to the state in which he finds himself down here”: this is where practical philosophy, from ethics to economics and politics, begins (pp. 12–13).

Philosophy understood in such a way, systematically solving and justifying all our problems, is not a chimera but “reality itself, and it is the sole doctrine that may go by the name of philosophy”. The “history of philosophy would [therefore] be the history of truth” (p. 11), but unfortunately this is not the case. Instead of truth we find “errors and passions”, and “the old age of the world, if it is such [a stage] that we have reached, only differs from its infancy in the greater extravagances that appear today in reasoning and in life” (p. 14). So why do we investigate the history of philosophy, why do we burden our “memory with a mass of various opinions that deserve only to be despised and forgotten?” Formey does not want to come to a “hasty decision”, but he points out that to spend one’s entire life unravelling the chaos of the history of philosophy is not a job for everyone, but only for the specialist. And here he cites Father Isaac de Beausobre with his *Histoire critique de Manichée et du Manichéisme* (Amsterdam, 1734–1739, 2 vols, the second of which was edited by Formey) and Brucker’s *Historia critica*. Yet no *savant*, whatever his field of specialization, can completely ignore the history of philosophy, and this is what an *abrégé* is for. Brucker himself wrote one (Formey is referring to the *Auszug aus den Kurzten Fragen*, 1736, and to the *Institutiones historiae philosophicae*, 1747). As there was no publication of this sort in French, Formey set out to provide one by abridging Brucker, for whom he expressed great admiration.

In practice, however, there was Delandes’ *Histoire critique* in French, which the public “welcomed [...] favourably”. But as a pious Calvinist, Formey did his utmost to demolish the work, even delivering a few blows below the belt to his adversary’s *esprit fort* in the final pages of the ‘Introduction’ (pp. 20–26). Deslandes’ work is “singular” rather than “sound”. It is the style that is singular, and here Formey recalls how, during a stay in Berlin, Voltaire personally received a copy of the *Histoire critique* and gave it back annotated with less than flattering

expressions concerning the provincial, “insipid style”. Its essential fault, though, is Deslandes’ imprecision when reporting the doctrines of the various philosophers, because he was misled by his libertinism. There is “nothing more revolting” than the title of that little book on those “great men who died *en plaisantant*”, states Formey, insinuating that Deslandes himself behaved like them, and that his deathbed recantation was highly equivocal (cf. *Réflexions sur les grands hommes qui sont morts en plaisantant*, Amsterdam, 1712). Formey continued in the same vein, with a series of completely unnecessary criticisms which aimed at discrediting his opponent (see *Models*, II, p. 207). Having thus cleared the field, he set off down his own path as an abridger, hoping only for the “approval of the friends of truth and virtue”.

### 8.1.4 *Histoire abrégée de la philosophie*

**8.1.4.1** The *Histoire abrégée de la philosophie*, which we read in the 1760 Amsterdam edition, comprises a ‘Dedication’ to the directors of the four classes at the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin (pp. v–viii), an ‘Introduction’ (pp. 9–28), a presentation of the history of philosophy (pp. 29–312), a ‘Conclusion’ (pp. 313–320), and a ‘General Index’ (pp. 321–324).

**8.1.4.2** The history of philosophy is divided by Formey into three books, each of which corresponds to the periods established by Brucker.

The first book, ‘Histoire de la philosophie depuis la création du monde, jusqu’à la fondation de Rome’ (pp. 29–153), includes a further division into two sections: the first of these deals with the ‘Histoire de la philosophie avant le déluge’ (pp. 29–32); the second with the ‘Histoire de la philosophie depuis le déluge jusqu’à la fondation de Rome’ (pp. 32–153), presenting Barbarian and Greek philosophy.

The second book, ‘Histoire de la philosophie depuis la fondation de Rome jusqu’au rétablissement des lettres après la prise de Constantinople’ (pp. 154–204), examines philosophy in Rome (pp. 155–177), among peoples in the East (dwelling in particular on Zoroaster: pp. 177–178), among the Hebrews, before and after the destruction of Solomon’s temple (pp. 178–190), among the Saracens or Arabs (pp. 191–194), among the early Christians (pp. 194–200) and during the Christian Middle Ages (pp. 200–204).

The third and final book, ‘Histoire de la philosophie depuis le rétablissement des lettres jusqu’au présent’ (pp. 205–313), follows the developments of modern philosophy from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, which “can be divided into Sectarian and Eclectic” (p. 203). By Sectarian philosophy (pp. 205–255), like Brucker, Formey means the philosophy after Humanism that returned to the principal Greek schools (Ionic, Pythagorean, Peripatetic, Stoic, Sceptic, etc.), and the philosophy that founded new ones (Mosaic, Theosophic, Syncretistic). Adopting Brucker’s definition, Eclectic philosophy starts with Giordano Bruno, Cardano, and Bacon and comprises the greatest modern thinkers: Campanella, Hobbes, Descartes, Leibniz, Newton, Ch. Thomasius, and Wolff (pp. 255–313). All the other Moderns (including Locke and Spinoza) are remembered as those whose object of study was

not philosophy as a whole but only certain aspects of it: logic, physics, metaphysics, morals and politics. However the reader is warned here that “it is impossible to account – in this textbook – for all the particular attempts that have been made to reform and perfect this or that part of philosophy. This can only be done by a general, detailed work on philosophy, which is Brucker’s great work” (p. 289).

The ‘Conclusion’, finally, considers the state of philosophy in general in the eighteenth century, with some considerations about thinkers in China, Japan, the Turkish Empire, and the Orient in general.

**8.1.4.3** Formey’s interpretations reiterate Brucker’s, and it is not necessary for us to describe them here. The only positive moment in the history of philosophy is that of modern Eclecticism. “Let us start”, Formey states at the beginning, “by distinguishing this modern Eclectic philosophy, the only philosophy worthy of the name, from that of the Ancients, which simply ended up in the Syncretism of which we have frequently spoken with the disdain it deserves. The new philosophers, strongly opposed to the Alexandrine sect that had been in vogue for so long and which so frequently presented itself again, realised that in order to cultivate philosophy successfully they had, first and foremost, to divest themselves of all prejudice and all bias in order to listen calmly to reason as the sole guide to which they might have recourse when dealing with this subject. They applied themselves to deducing from the notions provided by reason clear and certain principles capable of leading us to equally evident conclusions”. The Ancients had glimpsed such a way of philosophizing but were soon distracted by their pride and presumption. It was only at the start of the seventeenth century (thanks to the “concurrence of many great personalities who thanks to Providence were born within a brief period”) that “the clarity and solidity which we admire in them today” were slowly introduced into philosophical studies (pp. 255–256).

Despite his sympathy for modern Eclecticism, Formey was not fully in harmony with his age: “Among the enlightened our century enjoys, we can see the appearance of some rash hypotheses, some bold, extravagant and impious doctrines, far greater in number than in the dark centuries that preceded us. There is a horde of philosophers, and each one takes up this name as they like, believing that no hypothesis or doctrine can contest his beautiful spirit, above all his strong spirit”. Once again it is against misbelief, Pyrrhonism, and moral disorder that Formey directs his protests. He believes that those who are disgusted by this disorder can find an antidote to protect them against contagion: “They only have to arm themselves with healthy logic, strengthen themselves in it, and practise it unwaveringly: this will suffice to put them in a position to recognise nothing but the rights of truth and be assured against any error”. Against Rousseau’s pessimism concerning the arts and the sciences, Formey expresses his faith in this power of rational logic, convinced that one can be “an honest man even among so many men of vice, and a good philosopher even amidst the *tourbe Philosophesque*” (pp. 313–314).

**8.1.4.4** Formey’s lack of originality in interpreting the historical figures of philosophy is matched by his lack of an original method in compiling his textbook. Even in the case of the philosophers he examines most exhaustively, he does not go beyond a brief biographical description and a succinct account of the fundamental



themes of their philosophy. “We give here merely an idea of his general principles”, he writes of Leibniz (p. 282), a remark followed by a mere two pages, which speak of Leibnizian logic (the classification of ideas into obscure, confused, clear and distinct; symbolic kinds of knowledge; truth as the non-contradictory possible), and of the theory of the monads, with a final remark on theodicy. Even his beloved Wolff is granted little more than a brief biography, needless to say in a hagiographical tone, underlining the injustice of his expulsion from Halle and his successive, acclaimed return.

**8.1.5** The *Histoire abrégée de la philosophie* circulated widely, as is testified by the various editions and translations into German and English. It contributed to the dissemination of Brucker’s historiographical theories, albeit in abridged form, and presented itself as a preparatory work for general study and a reference for those who agreed neither with the theories of the French Enlightenment, particularly those of Voltaire, nor with Deslandes’ history of philosophy. Degérando judged Formey’s *Histoire* to be “rather superficial”, because “it lacks two main principles, solid erudition and a profound knowledge of the sciences” (Degérando,<sup>2</sup> I, p. 163).

**8.1.6** On Formey’s life and works: H.-B. Merian, ‘Éloge de M. Formey’, *Mémoires de l’Académie Royale des Sciences de Berlin*, II (1797), pp. 49–82; Heinsius, I, pp. 907–908; Kayser, I, p. 237; ADB, VII, pp. 156–157; DBF, LXXX, pp. 489–491; Cioranescu, pp. 811–814; DECGPh, pp. 341–344; E. Marcu, ‘Un encyclopédiste oublié: Formey’, *Rev. Hist. litt. France*, LIII (1953), pp. 296–305; W. Krauss, ‘Ein Akademiesekretär: Samuel Formey’, in Id., *Studien zur deutschen und französischen Aufklärung* (Berlin, 1963), pp. 53–62; F. Crispini, ‘La psicologia wolffiana di Samuel Formey e Louis de Beausobre’, *Riv. di storia della filosofia*, XLIV (1987), pp. 443–476; F. Moreau, ‘L’*Encyclopédie* d’après les correspondants de Formey’, *RDE*, no. 3 (1987), pp. 125–145; A. Hayes, ‘J.-H.-S. Formey (1711–1797): un encyclopédiste entre deux cultures’, in *Diffusion du savoir et affrontement des idées, 1600–1770* (Montbrison, 1993), pp. 235–251; A.-C. Briasson, N.-Ch.-J. Trublet, *Correspondance passive de Formey: lettres adressées à J.-H.-S. Formey, 1739–1770*, M. Fontius, R. Geissler and J. Häselser eds. (Paris and Genève, 1996); *Lettres d’Élie Luzac à J.-H.-S. Formey, 1748–1770: regard sur les coulisses de la librairie hollandaise du 18e siècle*, H. Bots and J. Schillings eds. (Paris, 2001); J. Häselser, ‘Formey et Crousaz, ou comment fallait-il combattre le scepticisme?’, in *The Return of Scepticism: From Hobbes and Descartes to Bayle*, ed. G. Paganini (Dordrecht, 2003), pp. 449–461; *La Correspondance de J.-H.-S. Formey (1711–1797): inventaire alphabétique, avec la bibliographie des écrits* [...], ed. J. Häselser (Paris, 2003); *Lettres de Genève (1741–1793) à J.-H.-S. Formey*, A. Bandelier and F.-S. Eigeldinger eds. (Paris, 2010); *Emer de Vattel à J.-H.-S. Formey : correspondances autour du Droit des gens*, ed. A. Bandelier (Paris, 2012).

On the *Histoire abrégée de la philosophie*: Carus, p. 75; Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, p. 163; Buhle, I, p. 10; Gumposch, p. 13; Geldsetzer, pp. 184 and 193; Braun, p. 201; Schneider, pp. 64, 69, 110, 136–137, and 341–344.

## 8.2 Anton Friederich Büsching (1724–1793)

### *Grundriss einer Geschichte der Philosophie und einiger wichtigen Lehrsätze derselben*

**8.2.1** Anton Friederich Büsching, who is considered to be the founder of the statistical method in geography, was born in Stadthagen in the county of Schaumburg (Lower Saxony) on 27th September, 1724; he was a contemporary of Kant, and was respected by him (in *Über den Gebrauch teleologischer Principien in der Philosophie*, Ak. VIII, p. 178, Kant describes Büsching as *ein scharfsinniger Mann*, and makes reference to his works in various places: see below, 8.2.6). After studying theology in Halle with Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten as one of his teachers, he was appointed tutor to the son of Rochus Friedrich von Lynar, the Danish secret councillor, in St. Petersburg. From 1749, Büsching began to collect material and information for the preparation of a great new work of geographical description (*Neue Erdbeschreibung*, Hamburg, 1754). Along with his geographical interests, which would last throughout his lifetime, Büsching also cultivated theology, philosophy, aesthetics, history, and didactics. In 1757 he was invited to Göttingen to be professor of philosophy and *Adjunkt* to the Faculty of Theology, becoming professor of theology in 1755. Here he actively participated in the discussions that were taking place, and with August Ludwig Schlözer (1735–1809) and Johann Beckmann (1739–1811) supported a centre for studies that laid “the foundations for a philologically reliable historiography of the Slav countries” (Marino, p. 17). In Göttingen he came into conflict with the professors of the theology faculty and was accused of heterodoxy.

In 1761, he left Göttingen and accepted a post as parish priest to the Lutheran community in St. Petersburg. After retiring from this office some years later, he settled in Altona, where he lived until 1767, when he was called to Berlin to become *Oberconsistorialrath* and principal of the united Gymnasiums of Berlin and Cologne, together with the schools that were annexed to them. His *Grundriss einer Geschichte der Philosophie* and other didactic works are connected to his work there. He died in Berlin on 28th May, 1793.

**8.2.2** Büsching wrote over a hundred works that cover various fields (theology, philosophy, history, didactics and, above all, geography). As far as the general bibliography is concerned, see the indices and biographies indicated in § 6 in this entry. Here we will mention only those works of particular philosophical interest: *Grundriss einer Geschichte der Philosophie und einiger wichtigen Lehrsätze derselben* (Berlin, 1772–1774, 2 vols); *Ästhetische Lehrsätze und Regeln* (Hamburg, 1774); *Vergleichung der griechischen Philosophie mit der neuern. Ein Versuch und eine Probe* (Berlin, 1785); *Grundlage zu einer Geschichte der Bemühungen und Verdienste alter und neuer Völker um die Gelehrsamkeit* (Berlin, 1792).

**8.2.3** Büsching was first and foremost a geographer and he devoted himself to the history of philosophy only for educational purposes, as is clear from the first volume of the *Grundriss*. In philosophy he was a follower of Wolff. “By

philosophy we mean an effort to know in depth the general inner properties of things in order then to direct this knowledge to the improvement of man and his happiness. In order to avoid as many errors as possible in such knowledge, the laws of thinking are to be learnt correctly and profoundly (*richtig und gründlich*), that is logic" (*Grundriss*, I, 'Einleitung', p. 1). From the very outset, he was concerned with the relationship between philosophy and religion. He rejected the German term *Weltweisheit*, 'worldly wisdom', for philosophy, because it could designate the ancient pagan philosophy that was condemned by some of the early Fathers of the Church. For him, true philosophy was indispensable to humanity and was perfectly and amicably in harmony with the Christian religion. The origin of philosophy was theological: God Himself infused in the minds of our forefathers "the first concepts pertaining to His essence, relating to the origin of the world, the worship which is His due, the duties men must observe with respect both to themselves and to others". He continues by saying that God's aim was not only that man should preserve such concepts faithfully but should also increase them and make them fruitful by means of his own reflection. The authors of this reflection took on "the name of sages or, better, the simple name of philosophers" (I, pp. 3–4). The dissemination of such divine knowledge, preserved and re-elaborated by mankind, is the history of philosophy, which therefore began with mankind and diffused through all peoples.

From the historiographical point of view, Büsching believed that he had to proceed by distinguishing between philosophers and fundamental philosophical ideas. This distinction gave rise to the two parts of the *Grundriss*. The first part, which should contain "some brief information about the most important philosophers" (I, p. 7), takes up most of the work. The second part of his history of philosophy could be defined as a history of problems. Like Wolff, Büsching identifies these within the themes of special metaphysics: God, the world, and the soul. Within each problem there is a series of questions, and for each of these he reports the principal solutions found by the main philosophers. For example, the problem of God is subdivided into the questions of the origin of the idea of him, the proofs of his existence, which are in their turn divided into various types (moral, historical, ontological, cosmological), his unity, and so on.

The purpose of a history of philosophy thus organised is repeatedly explained by Büsching in the 'Vorrede' to the first volume. If in taking up the study of philosophy a young man came to learn about just one system offered by just one author, he would be convinced that "the author of the system had dealt thoroughly with the whole of philosophy and that in the question of philosophy one has to think only in this way and in exactly the same way as the author of the system thought. The young man would then become sectarian". To avoid this evil, Büsching believes that a "well-founded and unbiased" study of the history of philosophy is necessary (I, pp. iv–v). He is convinced that such a historical study is useful for personal reflection. This conviction is expressed at the beginning of Part II, where, after the long series of details in the previous part, he links historical culture together with the three problems of God, the world, and the soul: "The historical way of philosophizing consists in this, in letting the different thoughts and the different opinions of ancient

and modern philosophers concerning certain fundamental topics of philosophy be known; this historical method should not hinder reflection and personal research, but on the contrary encourage it" (II, p. 663).

## 8.2.4 *Grundriss einer Geschichte der Philosophie*

**8.2.4.1** The *Grundriss einer Geschichte der Philosophie und einiger wichtigen Lehrsätze derselben* was published by J.G. Basse in Berlin in two tomes, the first in 1772, the second in 1774. The page numbering continues into the second volume. Each volume has a 'Vorrede' (I, pp. II–XVI; II, pp. XV–XXII) and a schematic index (I, pp. XVII–XX; II, pp. XV–XXII), while only Part I has an 'Einleitung' (I, pp. 1–6), with which the division of the work into paragraphs begins. In the 'Einleitung', Büsching clarifies his concept of philosophy and its merit he furthermore discusses the origins and the development of philosophy before Moses and among the oldest peoples, giving his views on the way in which the ancients taught philosophy. The treatise is divided, as we have said, into two Parts: the first, which also continues into the second, is entitled 'Eine kurze Nachricht von den merkwürdigsten Philosophen' (I, pp. 7–420; II, pp. 424–662); and the second Part is entitled 'Versuch einer Geschichte unterschiedener wichtigen Lehrsätze von Gott, von der Welt und von den Seelen der Menschen und Thiere' (II, pp. 663–940).

The first Part, the history of philosophers, is organized along the traditional lines of "nations" and schools, yet the important characters manage to stand out from the classification. Much of Büsching's survey is taken up by the ancient philosophers, set out as follows: there is a small number of paragraphs on the pre-Greek philosophers: the Chaldeans, Persians, Egyptians, Indians, and the ancient Arabs (I, pp. 7–26); this is followed by the Greek philosophers: the Ionic school (pp. 30–36); the Socratics, that is to say Socrates and the minor Socratic schools (pp. 37–66); the Italic philosophers, from Pythagoras to the Eleatics and Heraclitus (pp. 67–118); from Plato and the Academics to the New Academy of Antiochus of Ascalon (pp. 118–166); from Aristotle and the Peripatetics to Demetrius Phalereus (pp. 167–211); the "mechanist philosophers", that is to say, Leucippus and Democritus, then Epicurus and the Epicureans (pp. 211–283); the Stoics (pp. 283–410); and the Sceptics, from Pyrrho to Sextus Empiricus (pp. 410–420).

The first volume ends here; the survey of the various philosophers continues in the second, preceded by a few "general observations on Greek philosophy" (II, pp. 423–424) and by a "subdivision of the Greek philosophers from the point of view of the form of philosophy" (pp. 425–430): the Dogmatics, the Doubters (*Zweifler*, like the Academics), and the Sceptics. The survey then moves on to the philosophy of the Romans, from Lucullus to Cicero, up to the age of the Empire (pp. 430–454), to the Neopythagoreans, the Platonists, that is medieval Platonism, and the Eclectics, that is to say, Neoplatonic syncretism (pp. 455–492). At this point, Büsching adds a continuation of the treatment of Neoplatonism up to the modern age, from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century (pp. 492–496); he continues in an analogous way

with the Theosophs and Kabbalists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who were related to the Neoplatonists (pp. 496–499), and, by analogy, he comes to the other schools and how they disseminated from late antiquity to the modern age: the Peripatetics from the Romans to the Byzantines in the fifteenth century, on the one hand, and the medieval Latin Aristotelians on the other, to the Renaissance (pp. 499–517); the followers of Democritus and Epicurus from the Romans to Gassendi (pp. 517–523); the Stoics in the Imperial Age to Lipsius and Jakob Thomasius (pp. 523–540); and the Cynics in the Roman age (pp. 541–545). At this point, since it seems that the ancient schools and their modern extensions have been exhausted, Büsching dedicates a single paragraph, no. 88, to the “Scholastic philosophers” (pp. 545–553), where he points out above all the “subtleties” in the question of universals. The last section of the first Part is a brief discourse on the “new philosophical elaborations” of the sixteenth century (Lefèvre d’Étaples, Telesio, Nizolio, Bruno, Berigardo, Cardan and a few others: II, pp. 553–559) and the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, subdivided by nation: England (pp. 559–579), France (pp. 579–599), Holland (pp. 646–654), and Switzerland (pp. 654–659).

The rest of this second volume (pp. 663–940) presents Part II of the work devoted to the “history of the most important and distinct doctrines concerning God, the world, and the souls of men and animals”. This theological survey deals with the origin of the idea of ‘God in man’, the proofs of his existence (moral, historical, ontological, and cosmological), and the unity of God and his providence (pp. 663–750). The cosmological doctrine begins with the question of the infinity of the world and, after the ancient and modern proofs against infinity, moves on to the question of the origin of the world, comparing three positions: from God alone as creator, from matter alone, from both God and matter. The reader is then brought swiftly to the question of the end of the world, which is apparently admitted neither by the Ancients nor by the Moderns, and the third question concerning a better world is then debated at length, with a discussion of the theories of evil in the world: from the Ancients (Pythagoras, Plato, Celsus, Origen, the Stoics, Plotinus, Simplicius, and Sallust) to the Moderns (Leibniz, Meier, Bonnet), ending with a general adherence to Leibniz’s optimism (pp. 750–810). Finally, his psychological doctrine deals with the themes of the material and spiritual reality of the soul, the origin of the human soul and its place in the body, and the relationship between the body and the soul and freedom and immortality (pp. 820–940).

**8.2.4.2** The periodization used by Büsching, and taken from Brucker, is the division into the ancient world (but going well beyond its chronological limits, up to the rebirth of the schools from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century), the medieval world, and the modern world. The modern world is characterized by the invention of new systems (Brucker’s “eclectics”); the medieval world is swiftly and disdainfully dismissed and is lumped together with the “subtleties” of scholastic philosophy.

**8.2.4.3** An intelligent, erudite follower of Brucker, Büsching reiterates his basic theories and, on the whole, his judgments. Philosophy began with the Chaldeans and the Persians, the oldest peoples, and, contrary to the opinion of Diogenes Laertius, it was not the Greeks who invented it, even though, from Orpheus, “the true founder of Greek philosophy”, onwards, they were its main promoters (I, pp. 26–27). Brucker’s

well-known opinions, which Büsching repeats, include an appreciation of Socrates, a partial belittlement of Plato for his lack of systematic method, and the culmination of Greek philosophy with Aristotle. Büsching values Aristotle's logic ("In the *Organon* Aristotle provides the desired indication of the correct way to use reason to know the truth": p. 176), but not his physics; as far as the doctrine of God and souls is concerned, Büsching refers the reader to the treatment of concepts in Part II (p. 181). Here he underlines the poverty of Aristotle's concept of God, since the Stagirite considers him as the mere "engine of a machine" that he himself does not create and with which he does not concern himself providentially (pp. 734–735). As for the soul, Aristotle "speaks rather obscurely" (pp. 816–817); Aristotelian ethics on the other hand is appreciated. Despite the references to the second Part of the *Grundriss*, the nature of the work as a condensed school textbook (pp. 174–185) can be seen in the concise way in which Aristotelian philosophy is treated, even though it is considered to be the pinnacle of ancient philosophy.

The greatest positive judgments are reserved for the Moderns: "The seventeenth century was the richest in the philosophical minds, which penetrated into an understanding of the foundations of the errors and gaps in the philosophy of their time, tried to remedy them, and, without depending slavishly on any given party, judged according to their own views" (pp. 559–560). Bacon was the first of these philosophical minds, about whom Büsching provides ample information, concluding with an appreciation of his practical philosophy, which reveals "much knowledge of the heart of man and the world, so that the reader's reflections on his works may be of great use, while we can say that he formulated a very good picture of the history of science and, in particular, of philosophy" (p. 563). On the contrary, he does not greatly esteem Hobbes, says nothing about Spinoza, and, although he states that Descartes is one of the "greatest philosophical minds" of his century, he highlights his basic error, that is, his absolute doubt of the senses and the radical innate nature of ideas (pp. 580 and 585–587). Indeed, not even Locke is admired without reservation: "one should not be surprised that there are many questionable and inexact propositions in his writings" (p. 568). The only two reliable philosophers are the Germans Leibniz and Wolff: the former "rendered a great service to logic and established a sound foundation for ontology, developed cosmological doctrines, enriched natural theology with important observations and was also successful in the political sciences" (p. 611). Wolff then receives the most extensive treatment (pp. 615–639), with admiration for the systematic and reasoned nature of his thought.

**8.2.4.4** Büsching's methodology is that of the writer of a textbook, who continually refers to the great historiographer (Brucker) on one hand, and, on the other, directs his students to the works of the philosophers themselves. In Part I, Büsching restricts himself to offering information according to the following framework: the life and works of the philosopher, his characteristics as a man and as a thinker, and his contributions to philosophy, that is to say, a brief account of his thought, recalling the main propositions in which it is expressed. The notes at the end of the discussion of each author or period are very useful: besides Brucker and

a few other historians (at times Bayle), he cites the editions of the works available to students and, frequently, long passages in the original language (Latin and Greek) from the works themselves and from other sources (recourse to Cicero is frequent). In the second Part, the systematic historical account also continues in textbook style, and references to thoughts and opinions prevail, rather than a true critical discussion.

**8.2.5** Büsching's textbook must have been used quite widely, at least in the Gymnasiums of Berlin and Cologne of which he was head. Gurlitt (*Abriss*, pp. IV–V) and Stöwe (*Versuch*, p. XV) used it to compile their own works. The *Grundriss* was reviewed in the TM, 1775, I, p. 286, and is mentioned by Ernesti and Buhle. It was not judged favourably by Carus, who stated that “as a compendium it was compiled too extensively and not critically enough, as a textbook it was not satisfactory. The best point was the history of dogmas and the correct view of judgement (*Urtheil*)” (Carus, p. 80). Finally, Braun includes it among texts of Bruckerian inspiration.

**8.2.6** On Büsching's life and works: G.L. Spalding, *Oratio funebris de Büschingio* (Berlin, 1793); Ersch-Gruber, XIII/1, pp. 385–389; Heinsius, I, p. 478; Kayser, I, pp. 396–397; ADB, II, pp. 644–645; DECGPh, 174–176; A. Kühn, *Die Neugestaltung der deutschen Geographie im 18. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 1939), pp. 61–62; I. Egger, ‘Geographie und Statistik in der Reiseliteratur der Goethezeit: Anton Friedrich Büsching und Christian Joseph Jagemann im Kontext zeitgenössischen Italienbeschreibung’, in *Viaggiare per sapere. Percorsi scientifici tra Italia e Germania nel XVIII e XIX secolo*, ed. E. Agazzi (Fasano, 1997), pp. 117–127; P. Hoffmann, *Anton Friedrich Büsching (1724–1793). Ein Leben im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Berlin, 2000).

Büsching's character and work have been assessed by L. de Beausobre, *Introduction générale à l'étude de la politique, des finances et du commerce* (Amsterdam, 1765<sup>2</sup>), I, p. 13; L.E.G. Gedike, *Erinnerung an Büsching's Verdienste am das Berlinische Schulwesen* (Berlin, 1795); I. Kant, *Aufsätze, das Philantropin betreffend*, Ak. II, p. 451; Id., *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Rechtslehre*, Ak. VI, p. 353; Id., *Streit der Fakultäten*, Ak. VII, p. 93; Id., *Über den Gebrauch teleologischer Principien in der Philosophie*, Ak., VIII, p. 178; Id., *Physische Geographie*, Ak., IX, p. 161; Id., *Opus postumum*, Ak. XII, p. 620; K. Kretschmer, *Geschichte der Geographie* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1923), p. 136; Marino, p. 17.

The *Grundriss* is mentioned by TM, 1775, I, p. 286; Buhle, I, p. 10; Ernesti, p. 104; Carus, p. 80; Gumposch, pp. 129 and 134; Geldsetzer, p. 184; Braun, p. 380; Schneider, pp. 64, 144, and 202.

### **8.3 Franz Nikolaus Steinacher (1743–1788)** *Grundriss der philosophischen Geschichte*

**8.3.1** Franz Nikolaus Steinacher was born in Neustadt am Saal (Lower Franconia) on 16th March, 1749. After his initial studies, he became a novice in the Society of Jesus in 1762. In 1766, he was admitted to the seminary in Würzburg, where he completed his studies in theology and philosophy. During his first year of theology

(1772) he discussed and published some theses, but the suppression of the Society in 1773 interrupted his religious education. In the same year, he obtained the chair of philosophy at the University of Würzburg, and in this new role he published various works, among which is his *Grundriss der philosophischen Geschichte*. After teaching at the university for 8 years, he resigned and worked as a tutor for the noble De Greifenklau family. In 1787, he started to teach ecclesiastic history at the theology faculty in Würzburg which he continued to do until his death on 17th July, 1789.

**8.3.2** Steinacher's publications concern theological and philosophical topics. After the *Theses ex theologia universa* (Würzburg, 1772), he published the textbook we examine here: the *Grundriss der philosophischen Geschichte* (Würzburg: J. Stahel, Hochfürst. Hof- und Univ. Buchhandlung, 1774), of which there is also a second edition dated Würzburg, 1774, but actually published in 1785 without the author's authorization, by the bookseller Jakob Stahel (as far as the latter is concerned, see Steinacher's own clarification, which appeared in the *Gothaischen Gelehrten Zeitungen*, 1786, p. 344). These works were followed by a *Commentatio academica de nexu historiae philosophicae cum scientiis* (Würzburg, 1774); the *Concordia doctrinae philosophorum de officiis hominis erga se ipsum cum principis religionis revelatae* (Würzburg, 1774); the *Elementa philosophiae rationalis* (Würzburg, 1774); and the *Elementa philosophiae universalis practicae* (Würzburg, 1777). Finally, during his brief teaching period at the theology faculty, Steinacher published the *Exempla stili Latini, ex poetis collecta* (Würzburg, 1788).

**8.3.3** Both Steinacher's thought and his historiographical activity took their bearings from Wolff. In the Introduction to the *Grundriss*, Steinacher discusses the "worth of history" in general and the history of philosophy in particular, pointing out the advantages of the historiography of philosophy with regard to a knowledge of oneself, theoretical philosophy, and other branches of knowledge. History "still remains, despite all the hostility, a pleasant occupation for the human mind and an important part of culture". In addressing his work to the pupils at the Seminary in Würzburg, he believes he can offer them "a gallery of pictures wherein they can truly glimpse human wisdom and folly, a play that amuses, yet teaches the intellect and moves the heart". This is because, Steinacher continues, every century has looked up to philosophy and if "in our age the word 'philosophical' is so seductive that it is widely abused in all sectors of human knowledge", then, "this abuse and the very zeal with which studies in the field of philosophy are carried out are clear proof of the high esteem in which this precious part of knowledge is held" (*Grundriss*, pp. 1, 3 and 5).

The general worth of the history of philosophy is to be found in its fertility and in the advantages to be gained through it for "men's mind and heart. If a history has no effect on either of these, it belongs to the multitude of works written to amuse melancholy spirits in idle hours". Man's mind and heart can be considered equivalent to Wolff's distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy, and the "pictures of human wisdom and folly" immediately remind us of Thomasius' definition of the history of philosophy as the history of the origin and progress of



wisdom and stupidity. One of the particular advantages of the history of philosophy is the “knowledge of ourselves” that it produces. Steinacher takes the history of philosophy to mean the “history of the human intellect”, as Brucker had done, because “it grasps the first perspectives elaborated by the intellect and all the occasions on which it has developed. It enquires into the natural paths it follows towards truth and observes its progress; it also, however, discovers the errors by which it is seduced because of philosophical and moral causes” (pp. 5–6).

As far as theoretical philosophy is concerned, the historical approach offers the opportunity to discover “the sources of errors in the works and opinions of the early fathers” (p. 6). Here Steinacher points out Gassendi, Locke, and Leibniz’s debt to the ancients. In order to obtain these advantages, the history of philosophy must satisfy four conditions: firstly it must set out the truth; secondly it must not deal with all philosophies but select some; thirdly it must be impartial; and fourthly it must be able to see the links between the facts in an explanation. Steinacher believes that the order of presentation of the history of philosophy is also important; indeed, it “follows the human intellect from its obscurest knowledge to the highest levels of philosophical conceptions” (p. 17). On the basis of this historiographical idea, and adopting Brucker’s divisions, Steinacher states that there are three main ages of the intellect that characterize the progress of philosophy (see below, 8.3.4.2). In order to outline these ages and see the significant periods in the historical course of philosophy, it is necessary to have a prior concept of philosophy. He therefore contests Deslandes, who in the ‘Preface’ to his work (see *Models*, II, p. 183) had warned the reader not to expect any definition of ‘philosophy’ in his history. Steinacher maintains, on the contrary, that it is necessary to distinguish philosophy from other aspects of culture, for example the sciences: “We shall leave the tales of the ‘revolutions’ that occurred in science, which were counted as part of philosophy but which do not belong to its family tree, to the philosophy of history”. Philosophy is thus defined as “all forms of knowledge linked to one another and to all the norms of reason, how one knows how to think and how one has to act”. Hence the object of philosophy is the search for theoretical principles and the norms for moral action: “empirical types of knowledge, which are the natural results of the human intellect, [...] and even manifestations of a higher Revelation” do not belong to philosophy (p. 18).

### 8.3.4 *Grundriss der philosophischen Geschichte*

**8.3.4.1** Steinacher’s textbook is divided into three parts (pp. 25–219, 220–261, and 262–365), each of which covers one of the three periods (*Zeiträume*) in the history of philosophy. It is preceded by a dedication (pp. [I]–[VI], unnumbered) to Adam Friederich, bishop of Bamberg and Würzburg, and by a ‘Vorrede’ (pp. [VII]–[X]) and a ‘Tabellarischer Abriss’ (pp. [XI]–[XIII]), the index to the volume. The treatment of the subject begins with an ‘Einleitung’ (pp. 1–24), where the author provides a theoretical discussion of the value and the advantages of the historiography of philosophy up to his own time. Each age closes with a number

of general observations that serve to sum it up. In the third age, the review of the state of philosophy in its various branches finally involves the reproduction of tables of statistics taken from the works by Gatterer (1727–1799) concerning the philosophical publications in Germany in the 3 years 1769–1771. The first table is devoted to philosophy, the second to the natural sciences, and the third to mathematics. In them Steinacher indicates the number and genre (textbook, lexicon, essay, translation) of the publication. The tables are constructed in such a way as to enable the reader to see how many philosophical “essays” pertaining to a single branch of philosophy (for example, moral philosophy) were published in each of the 3 years indicated. Finally, Steinacher ends his text with a ‘Synchronistische Tabelle zur philosophischen Geschichte’, taken from Brucker: a chronological list of the authors dealt with in the *Grundriss*, with their dates of birth and death.

**8.3.4.2** “There are three main ages of philosophical intellect,” Steinacher states. The first “starts with the most ancient peoples, the so-called Barbarians, and lasts until the beginning of the Roman monarchy” (*Grundriss*, pp. 17 and 19). It comprises the philosophy of the Barbarians, subdivided into those of the East (Chaldeans, Persians, Indians, Arabs, and Phoenicians), the South (Egyptians, Ethiopians), the West (Celtics, Schytians, Etruscans, etc.), and the philosophy of the Greeks. In describing Greek philosophy, the author uses Laetius’ framework of the division into the Ionic and Italic schools. Greek philosophy ends with the Sceptics.

The second period comprises “the entire period of time from the reception of Greek philosophy by foreigners to the palingenesis of science”, in other words, from Roman philosophy to the Renaissance (p. 21). This age comprises philosophy in Rome (from Lucretius) and in the East (the Hebrews and Saracens), the development of Christian thought in the early period (the Fathers of the Church) and the revival of Aristotelian thought with Latin Scholasticism (subdivided into three periods, starting with Abelard).

Finally, the third age begins “with the palingenesis of the sciences and comes up to the most recent times”, namely the eighteenth century (p. 23). It comprises the Renaissance, seen as a revival of the Ancient schools (Aristotelians – subdivided into Catholics and Protestants – and Platonists, Stoics, etc.) and as the flourishing of those philosophies which Steinacher considers to be “obstacles” to the improvement of thought: those of the “Mosaics”, such as Bochart, Scheuchzer, E. Dickinson, and T. Burnet; the “inspired” philosophers like Paracelsus, R. Fludd, and P. Poiret; the syncretists, like M. Pansa, A. Steuco, D. Huet and, in his early period, Leibniz himself; and finally the Sceptics, such as Montaigne, and the Libertines to Bayle. The true modern age includes the “new Eclectics” (in Brucker’s sense), grouped into “creators and founders of the philosophical way of thinking in general” (Bacon, Descartes, Newton, Leibniz, and Chr. Wolff), and those who have made “contributions to special parts of philosophy”, that is to say, to the “doctrine of reason” (Hobbes, Gassendi, Malebranche, Tschirnhausen, and Locke), to physics (Copernicus, Brahe, Kepler, and Galileo), to metaphysics (Spinoza and the Occasionalists), and to practical philosophy, within which Steinacher includes modern natural law (Grotius, etc.).

**8.3.4.3** Steinacher's work does not contain any truly original historiographical theories that differ from those of Brucker. He is a staunch supporter of Wolff's philosophy, and although he defends his Catholic religious views from the Protestants, he believes that Catholics and Protestants may come to an agreement in Wolffian philosophy. He does not hesitate, therefore, to interpret the history of philosophy by reading it through the theoretical views of Wolff and the historiographical approach of Brucker.

Among the Ancients, Steinacher attributes particular importance to Socrates, whose 'knowing that he knows nothing' is not to be interpreted in Huet's sceptical manner (see *Models*, II, pp. 143–144). Socrates meant only to stress the limitations of the human mind and oppose the arbitrary certainties of the Sophists. Needless to say, Plato and Aristotle occupy an important place (but Epicureanism is also dealt with fully), and their thought is explained following a framework that clearly reveals the influence of the structure of Wolff's system: first dialectics, equivalent to logic, which introduces the whole system, then theoretical philosophy and finally practical philosophy (moral and political). Plato is interpreted in a Neoplatonic key and is thus judged highly negatively. Steinacher emphasizes the obscurity in Aristotle's works, which he attributes to manipulations of the texts on the part of editors and to a lack of understanding by interpreters and commentators (pp. 138–139). A general judgment on Greek thought is expressed in the 'Observations on Greek History' (pp. 211–219), which conclude the account of the first epoch. In general, Steinacher holds that the Greeks represent a great step forward compared to the a-logical and religious thought of the Barbarians. However, they remain inferior to the Moderns, both in their elaboration of moral ideas, due to their paganism, and in their theoretical ideas, which were developed, on the contrary, by the Moderns who were also responsible for the great discoveries and the progress made in the positive sciences.

Medieval philosophy is given the typically negative appraisal in Steinacher that it receives in Brucker, while, after the Renaissance, the Modern age of the great philosophical systems represents true progress compared to the Ancients. The "New Eclectics", Bacon, Descartes, Newton, Leibniz, and Wolff, are not followers of schools but free, original creators. The culmination of the new philosophy was reached by Wolff, who elaborated Leibniz' system to the highest level (pp. 323 and 324). Spinoza, on the other hand, is bluntly condemned for his naturalistic Pantheism (p. 341).

**8.3.4.4** Steinacher's methodology does not present any new features compared to that of Brucker either, except for the greater emphasis he places on the didactic aim of the work, only to be expected from a textbook intended for the pupils of a seminary. The narrative must be stimulating, and the history of philosophy must not be a mnemonic science but instruct the intellect and involve the heart (pp. 9–10).

**8.3.5** Steinacher's textbook, written for the schools, must have been fairly popular in that environment. Cited by Carus and Ernesti, in Hofmann's opinion it reflects the theologian's need to study the history of philosophy (*Über das Studium*, p. 94).

**8.3.6** On Steinacher's life and works: A. Ruland, *Series et vitae professorum SS. Theologiae qui Wirceburgi a fundata Academia per divum Julium usque in annum MDCCCXXXIV docuerunt* (Würzburg, 1835), pp. 199–201; F.X. von Wegele, *Geschichte der Universität Würzburg*; Part I (Würzburg, 1882), p. 458; Sommervogel, VII, p. 1535; DECGPh, pp. 1128–1129.

The *Grundriss der philosophischen Geschichte* is mentioned by Hofmann, *Über das Studium der philosophischen Geschichte*, 'Vorrede' and pp. 4, 62, 83, 85, 90, and 95; Carus, p. 81; Ernesti, p. 104; Gumposch, p. 270; Geldsetzer, p. 53; Braun, p. 380; Schneider, p. 143.

## 8.4 Karl Adolph Cäsar (1744–1811)

### *Betrachtungen über die wichtigsten Gegenstände der Philosophie*

**8.4.1** Karl Adolph Cäsar was born in Dresden on 12th April, 1744; he attended the gymnasium in Görlitz and then enrolled at the University of Leipzig, where he came into contact with the Wolffian circle, represented in Leipzig in those years by J.C. Gottsched, as a consequence of which took up Wolff's theories. In 1769 he became a *magister* and in 1770 he obtained his teaching diploma. After this, he became tutor to the von Reisewetter family's children, a position that lasted for some years. In 1778, he returned to Leipzig, where he began to teach open courses on philosophy as a temporary professor. In 1789 he was appointed full professor of philosophy and took an active part in university life: he was four times rector and attempted to reform the philosophy courses, as documented in his own writings. He died on 12th January, 1811, in Leipzig where he had lived all his life.

**8.4.2** Cäsar's literary output includes philosophical works, academic speeches, translations, and commentaries; he was, moreover, the editor of two philosophical reviews. Of his philosophical works, it is his historiographical studies that are of interest to us: the *Betrachtungen über die wichtigsten Gegenstände der Philosophie*, the first edition of which appeared in Leipzig and Dessau in 1783; the second was published in Leipzig in 1784 by Johann Gottfried Müllerschen (it is this edition that we cite). He also published the *Philosophische Rhapsodien* (Leipzig, 1788); the *Gedanken über die menschliche Glückseligkeit* (Leipzig, 1789); and the *Pragmatische Darstellung des Geistes der neuesten Philosophie des In- und Auslandes* (Leipzig, 1801–1806, 3 vols).

Several academic speeches in Latin, not only on legal and didactic issues but also on philosophical topics, have been handed down to us. Some speeches are of a commemorative nature. Some of Cäsar's translations are also important, among them: Paolo Zambaldi, *Natürliche und Sittliche Geschichte des Menschen* (Leipzig, 1784; see *Saggi per servire alla storia dell'uomo*, Venice, 1767); Charles-E. Dufriche de Valazé, *Über die Strafgesetze oder Entwurf zu einem allgemeinen Strafcodex*

(Leipzig, 1786; see *Traité des lois pénales*, Paris, 1784); Ferdinando Galiani, *Recht der Neutralität* (Leipzig, 1790; see *De' doveri de' principi neutrali verso i principi guerreggianti e di questi verso i neutrali*, Naples, 1782); Gustaf Sjöborg, *Über Volks-Despotismus* (Leipzig, 1793; see *De despotismo populi*, Amsterdam, 1644<sup>2</sup>); Lodovico Antonio Muratori, *Anfangsgründe der Regierungskunst für junge Fürsten* (Leipzig 1798; see *Rudimenti di filosofia morale per il principe*: this work, which was not published until 1872, was written in the year 1713). He also edited two philosophical periodicals: the *Denkwürdigkeiten aus der philosophischen Welt* (Leipzig, 1785–1788) and the *Philosophische Annalen* (Nürnberg, 1787–1789), neither of which was long-lived.

**8.4.3** Cäsar's education took place, as we have said, at the University of Leipzig, where for 40 years (1725–1766) Johann Christoph Gottsched had devoted himself to the dissemination and reconsideration of Wolff's philosophy. Wolff and Leibniz also inspired Cäsar's thought. In opposition to "the paradox of Rousseau", he maintained the usefulness of the sciences and the arts, which contribute to man's wellbeing. However, he distinguishes between a "mnemonic erudition" (*Gedächtnisgelehrsamkeit*) and a "reasoning erudition" (*räsonnirende Gelehrsamkeit*). The former is the "tomb of truth and the creative spirit" and becomes merely useless pedantry. Reasoning erudition is clearly opposed to this: "If an erudite man wishes to bear this name honourably, he must not stand out only for the quantity of his useful knowledge but also possess, to an excellent degree, the gift of reasoning, that is of philosophizing. He must be accustomed to considering things according to the multiplicity of their relationships and connections, of their principles and consequences, of causes and effects" (*Betrachtungen*, § 6, p. 10).

Having thus distinguished philosophical knowledge from mere erudition, Cäsar renders his concept of philosophy more explicit by pointing out its meaning in both a general and in a more precise sense (§§ 13 and 21). The general sense is: "Every science can be appreciated, but none approaches philosophical sciences in their common usefulness and in their dignity. The importance of their objects, and the universality and the necessity of their principles confer on them, compared to the others, a decisive value". He then adds that philosophy lies "at the foundation of all other sciences" and concludes, echoing Melanchthon: "Its origin is divine because it is the revelation of God by means of reason; its end is happiness, because all its teachings tend towards happiness alone" (§ 13, pp. 15–16). The objects of philosophy, taken in the widest sense, are "God, the world, spirits, bodies and, in connection to all this, man" (§ 14, p. 17). As we can see, this is the Wolffian system, which certainly does not lack religious inspiration, borrowed, through Melanchthon, from the tradition of the German Protestant universities. In its universal characteristic, philosophy is different from the "positive sciences" (among which Cäsar includes history, law, and positive theology), which are connected to particulars. "Only the history of nature and that of man are indispensable to philosophy; all the other sciences cannot do without philosophy, but philosophy can do without them" (§ 18, p. 20). The stricter sense of philosophy is that in which it is designated only as a "systematic sketch of the most important philosophical principles", a system

which requires a “clarity of concepts”, “well-founded demonstrations”, a “suitable organization of its parts”, and “comprehensible and clear expression” (§ 21, p. 22).

Cäsar’s concept of the history of philosophy can be deduced from his opinion on modern works on the subject, which he expresses at the beginning of the second *Betrachtung*, devoted, precisely, to the “destinies” of philosophy, that is its history. “We have so far no general history of philosophy, written with a pragmatic intent”. It is, therefore, important for him that the history should be “general” and “pragmatic”. Garve and Stanley’s works (which he recalls in Oleario’s translation) lack generality because they are restricted almost exclusively to Greek philosophy. Brucker is indeed universal, but “in vain do we look in his works to grasp the spirit of philosophical systems” (§ 33, p. 41). Here, then, we have the other two characteristics of the historiography of philosophy: it must provide a “system” and capture its “spirit”. Since Brucker is inadequate, so are all the other compendiums taken from him. The *Della istoria e dell’indole di ogni filosofia* by Agatopisto Cromaziano is, in his opinion, a better work than Brucker’s in its being well-founded, its pleasant wording, and its exactitude. Bayle only supplied material for a philosophical history with his *Dictionnaire*, which was translated by Gottsched. But the works that are “epoch-making” are those by Meiners, whose *Geschichte des Ursprungs, Fortgangs und Verfalls der Wissenschaften in Griechenland und Rom* is “a classic work”. Cäsar’s historiographical views can thus be placed with the post-Bruckerian ideas of the time, in the spirit of Meiners and Tiedemann, yet still tied to academic Wolffism.

#### 8.4.4 *Betrachtungen über die wichtigsten Gegenstände der Philosophie*

**8.4.4.1** The work is divided into two parts with a series of 65 paragraphs numbered progressively. It opens with a dedication (pp. I–IX) to Christian Gotthelf von Gutschmidt, Baron of the H.R.E. and minister to the court of Saxony, a ‘Vorerinnerung an meine Zuhörer’ (pp. X–XXXI), and the index (pp. XXXIII–XXXVIII). The first part, consisting of the ‘Betrachtung über die Philosophie überhaupt’ (pp. 1–34), is theoretical in nature and is, in its turn, divided into two sections: the first examines culture (*Gelehrsamkeit*), that is arts and sciences; the second philosophy and its objects, both in the widest and in the strictest sense. At the end of the first part there is a chart (pp. 35–38) in which Cäsar clearly sets out all the topics of philosophy.

The second part is constituted by the ‘Betrachtung über die Schicksale und die Behandlungsart der Philosophie’ (pp. 41–113), which is the true history of philosophy. The author examines the development of philosophy from the earliest times (among the Barbarians) to its present state in the different European countries of the eighteenth century. In the first three paragraphs of this part, Cäsar recalls earlier historiographical works (by Stanley, Garve, Brucker, Bayle, Buonafede,

and Meiners) and questions the state of the sources of Ancient and Medieval philosophers. At the end of this history, in the last four paragraphs, he gives some bibliographical information on the school textbooks on philosophy used in Germany after Wolff, and discusses the following questions: whether it is advisable to study all the philosophical systems, which terminology is most useful for scholars of philosophy, and which philosophical literature is advantageous for those young men who wish to study this subject.

**8.4.4.2** Cäsar does not establish how the history of philosophy is to be divided into separate eras, but it is possible to see three periods in his work. The first embraces the thought of the Ancients, from the Barbarians to Greek philosophy, subdivided into two schools, the Ionic and the Pythagorean, or Italic; Roman philosophy and the Alexandrine, or Neoplatonic, school then follow this. The second period comprises the Middle Ages, from a very brief re-elaboration of Aristotelian philosophy among the Arabs to Latin Scholasticism of the thirteenth century. The last period is characterized primarily by opposition to Scholasticism and comprises the various attempts to reform philosophy through the work of the Humanists, the revival of Greek philosophical schools, and Protestantism. The true reform of philosophy took place with the thought of Bacon and continued with Leibniz and Wolff, its greatest exponents. Finally, an overview of the contemporary philosophical debate ends the third period. Only a few authors (Bacon, Leibniz, and Wolff) and orientations (Neoplatonism and Protestantism) are discussed fairly completely, albeit schematically; the others are merely mentioned and listed, following what had by then become the canon: Brucker's arrangements and order of time, with the additional concern of Meiners, whom Cäsar bore constantly in mind out of deference, to point out the progress made by human thought, which was destined to flourish with the Wolffian Enlightenment.

**8.4.4.3** As far as the thinkers of classical antiquity are concerned, Cäsar restricts himself to giving brief information and opinions about them. He pays greater attention to Neoplatonic philosophy, repeating the traditional condemnation of it, mainly according to Meiners' work, *Beitrag zur Geschichte der Denkart der ersten Jahrhunderten nach Christi Geburt* (Leipzig, 1782). The Fathers of the Church are not considered, but are included in the condemnation of Neoplatonism. The verdict on Scholasticism and its exponents is influenced by Tribbechow's disparaging work (*De Doctoribus scholasticis*, Jena, 1719): "a chaotic mixture of Christian, Alexandrine, and Aristotelian theories and opinions" (§ 35, p. 45). The spirit of philosophy, obscured by Neoplatonism and by all medieval philosophy, did not even regain strength in the fifteenth century, when, after the fall of Constantinople, the learned Greeks came to Italy. They were the cause of the rebirth of Neoplatonism, which would also gain followers in England in the seventeenth century (Cudworth, More).

Cäsar attributes a certain importance to the development of Protestant thought (Zwingli, Luther, Melancthon, and Calvin), which indicated new ways of thinking that were to be developed in Germany, even though they could not strictly speaking be called philosophical. The Reformers, however, revealed "an intolerant sectarianism and gave rise to religious wars and to the eternal mixture of religious

(confessional) practices and politics". This prevented universities from developing since the study of nature was abandoned and "philosophy followed the path of theology" (§ 47, pp. 77 and 79). In the sixteenth century, it was Bacon who truly indicated a new path for philosophy in stating that "man is allowed to penetrate (*eindringen*) the psychological and metaphysical world only through the physical one" (§ 48, p. 84).

When considering modern philosophy, Cäsar focuses his interest only on certain authors (Leibniz and Wolff and their schools) and briefly dismisses Hobbes, Malebranche, Descartes, and Locke. "With a highly patient spirit of research", Leibniz "traversed the boundless fields of nature and philosophy and, where his reflection penetrated, the most artificial hypotheses disintegrated, or new truths came to light, emerging from the thickest fogs; in certain cases he demolished, in others corrected or constructed, at times he was even too bold" (§ 50, pp. 86–87). One of the reasons for the importance of Leibniz and Wolff's thought was that it promoted German schools and universities; another merit was that of having rendered the German language "philosophical". After mentioning those who applied the spirit of Leibnizian and Wolffian philosophy to their research (Thomasius, A.G. Baumgarten, Lessing, Wieland, Garve, Zollikofer, Adelung, Mendelssohn, and Feder), Cäsar also cites those who had criticized this new way of philosophizing. However, they "ended up by proposing hypotheses that could not be proved and based themselves on the Neoplatonic view" (§ 56, p. 98), which once again seems to be responsible for all deviations from the true philosophical spirit. The only 'new Platonists' that are cited are Joachim Lange (1670–1748) and Adolf F. Hoffmann (1703–1741).

Other European countries, particularly England and France, also saw progress in philosophy comparable to that in Germany. With its great agricultural and commercial development, "strengthened by the spirit of bourgeois freedom", England saw the birth of poets, historiographers, and philosophers who elevated that country above other peoples. Among the exponents of this progress, Cäsar quotes Locke, Newton, Hobbes, Hutcheson, Hume, Ferguson, and Smith (§ 57, pp. 99–100). In France there was only a revival, albeit a brilliant one, of the elaboration carried out by the English: Montesquieu, D'Alembert, Voltaire, and Buffon acquired their wisdom from the new spirit of English thought. Cäsar thus confirms the penchant for English thought that characterized many circles in the late German Enlightenment. In the eighteenth century all countries made progress in all the sciences, yet to Cäsar's mind there was still too much obscurity, which could only be illuminated thanks to the education given in schools, molded by the spirit of Leibniz and Wolff's philosophy.

**8.4.4.4** A textbook such as this does not lend itself to many methodological considerations. The work flows fast and discursively, guided by the sole intent to give a picture of philosophy inspired by the ingenuous Enlightenment faith in progress, which is assumed to have taken place in the eighteenth century, and by Leibniz and Wolff's system, which was somewhat eclectic.



**8.4.5** Cäsar's textbook was widely used only in the Leipzig area. Gurlitt appreciated it, and his own *Abriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Leipzig, 1786, pp. IV, 3, 23, 241, and 261) was modelled on it.

**8.4.6** For Cäsar's life and works: ADB, III, p. 687; DECGPh, p. 179; G. Piaia, 'Dalla Francia alla Germania, tramite Venezia: la "storia dell'uomo" di Paolo Zambaldi', in Id., *Le vie dell'innovazione filosofica nel Veneto moderno (1700–1866)* (Padua, 2011), pp. 129–143 (139–143).

On the historical and cultural background: C. Kreussler, *Beschreibung der Feierlichkeiten am Jubelfeste der Universität Leipzig* (Leipzig, 1810), pp. 61–63; J.D. Schulze, *Abriss einer Geschichte der Leipziger Universität* (Leipzig, 1810<sup>2</sup>); Merker, *L'illuminismo tedesco*, pp. 56–59 and 154–164; G. Mühlpfordt, 'Halle und Leipzig als Zentren des Aufklärerbundes Deutsche Union', in *Gelehrte Gesellschaften im mitteldeutschen Raum (1650–1820)*, D. Döring and K. Nowak eds (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 2002), pp. 163–214.

The *Betrachtungen* were reviewed in the GGZ, 1784, pp. 765–766, and are recalled by Carus, p. 84; Braun, p. 381; Schneider, pp. 137 and 141.

## 8.5 Christian Gottlieb F. Stöwe

### *Versuch einer Geschichte der Philosophie, bloss zum Gebrauch für Schulen*

**8.5.1** Very little is known about the life of C.G.F. Stöwe: he taught at the *Pädagogium* of the *Realschule* in Berlin before 1785; from 1785 he was a preacher in Beyerdorf, then inspector in Züllichau in 1794, and finally *Diakon* in Potsdam from 1795.

**8.5.2** Stöwe's historiographical work is the *Versuch einer Geschichte der Philosophie, bloss zum Gebrauch für Schulen*, (Berlin: Buchhandlung der Realschule, 1783), which is the result of his work as a teacher at the *Ökonomisch-mathematische Realschule* in Berlin (it was in fact written at the request of the preacher and inspector Andreas Jakob Hecker).<sup>1</sup> To a large extent it was a compendium of Brucker's *Institutiones historiae philosophicae* and modelled itself on Büsching's *Grundriss einer Geschichte der Philosophie*. In his later years Stöwe turned his mind to geographical and astronomical studies and also became a preacher.

**8.5.3** The *Versuch* does not contain any specific thoughts on the concepts of philosophy or the historiography of philosophy, but some indications emerge in the

<sup>1</sup>The *Ökonomisch-mathematische Realschule* in Berlin was founded by Johann Julian Hecker (1707–1768), who had been educated at the Pietist school according to the teachings of Ph. J. Spener and A. Francke, and followed their idea of creating educational institutions of a practical, utilitarian nature.

‘Introduction’. Philosophy is the “science of the true nature, of the causes and ends of things and of the way in which man may learn about them through his reason”. It “thus has as an end exalting God, promoting the clarification (*Aufklärung*) of the intellect, and improving the will, and, consequently, its aim is man’s general happiness, and it hence offers, in a strict sense, friendship and a support to revealed religion” (*Versuch*, pp. 1–2). This concept of philosophy follows Brucker (see *Models*, II, pp. 486–487 and 493–494) and, in general, the views of the moderate religious enlightenment of a Pietist kind that were to be found in Berlin cultural circles; Leibniz and Wolff were taken as models, and their philosophy still had a certain influence in the years in which Stöwe was writing.

Stöwe’s philosophical perspective is closely connected to his historiographical outlook: his history of philosophy therefore traces the development and progress of thought, starting with the first philosophical intuition and arriving at the age of the true renewal produced by Eclectic philosophy, according to Brucker’s well-known theories. The historian of philosophy is called upon to carry out an enquiry that attempts to know “how philosophy or its single parts arose little by little, how they were developed and perfected, and what it was that the single philosophers or schools considered above all to be worthy of reflection”. The sources of the history of philosophy, for Stöwe, are what the philosophers themselves wrote, the ancient testimonies by which their “propositions or opinions” were handed down, and later historiographers (p. 3).

Furthermore, he believes it is important to stress the use of the study of the history of philosophy: it “serves to exercise and sharpen the mind, to learn gradually about philosophy itself and then to acquire in greater depth a true system; it protects us from harmful sectarianism, arouses a healthy doubt about ourselves, helps to clarify some obscure points in the classical authors, indicates both the capacity and the limitations of human reason, confirms the truth and value of the most authentic divine revelation, and greatly contributes to clarity in ecclesiastic history” (p. 4). Even when outlining the utilitarian aims of the study of the history of philosophy, Stöwe follows Brucker. It is to his credit that he reduced the endless work of his mentor in a simple linear form, making it a tool suited to the education of young people. In this way he enacted the proposal for a “popular education” that Pietism had elaborated outside the traditional, academic schools in order to offer, even to pupils of the *Realschule*, an abridged, yet in no way superficial, knowledge of the history of philosophy.

### 8.5.4 *Versuch einer Geschichte der Philosophie, bloss zum Gebrauch für Schulen*

**8.5.4.1** At the beginning of Stöwe’s work is a long ‘Vorrede’ (pp. III–XVI) and an ‘Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie’ (pp. 1–14), which begins the succession of paragraphs into which the work is divided. The work itself is divided

into three parts, and then into sections. The first part, ‘Von den Schicksaalen der Philosophie vor Christi Geburt’ (pp. 5–125), is divided into two sections: in the first, the developments in philosophy among the Ancients, before and after the Flood are examined (pp. 5–12); in the second (pp. 13–125) the philosophy of the Greeks, following the classic partition into schools (Ionic and Pythagorean, from which all the others descend). The second part, ‘Von dem Zustand der Philosophie nach Christi Geburt bis auf die Reformation’ (pp. 125–172), considers, in four successive sections, philosophy under the Romans, that is from the Late Republic to the Empire (pp. 125–147), that of the Jews (pp. 147–161), that of the Arabs or Saracens (pp. 161–163), and the philosophy of the Christians, from “before Scholasticism” (what we today call Patristic) to Scholasticism itself, which is reduced to a mere mention of the dispute over universals (pp. 163–172). The last part, ‘Von den neuern Bemühungen um die Verbesserung und Erweiterung der Philosophie bis auf unsere Zeit’ (pp. 173–223), outlines the history of modern thought in two sections: the first, on “Sectarian” philosophy, is dedicated to Renaissance thought, followed by Huet and Bayle’s Scepticism, the “Mosaic philosophers” (the English Neoplatonists), and the Kabbalists (among others Weigel, Fludd, and Böhme) (pp. 173–193); the second, starting from Giordano Bruno, presents “the new Eclectic philosophy” (Brucker’s name for modern philosophy), and the renewal of some parts of philosophy initiated by writers such as Bacon, Hobbes, Descartes, Leibniz, and Ch. Thomasius (pp. 193–223).

**8.5.4.2** Stöwe’s periodization of history is the same as that given in the index to the book, as explained above. His choice is inspired by Brucker, as transmitted by Büsching: the period of the Ancients before Christ, the Roman and medieval period up to the Reformation, and then the modern age, which is that of the “improvement” and “amplification” of philosophy. This appraisal of modernity also follows Brucker’s framework: in the Renaissance, “Sectarianism”, which was mainly negative and derived from the revival of Antiquity, was renewed; yet there was also “Eclecticism”, which was highly appreciated by Brucker and Stöwe, and which indicated the new, not the Ancient Sectarian, systems, thanks to the creativity of modern philosophers.

**8.5.4.3** Stöwe’s work does not present any original interpretation of thinkers and currents of thought. As we have said, the author merely retraces Brucker’s steps and follows Büsching’s *Grundriss*, which, he states, he “had continually kept before his eyes”. In general Stöwe shows that he appreciates Greek philosophy above all, because this is when systematic analysis in philosophical research began. Roman philosophy was nothing but a continuation of the Greek, while, in full accordance with the historiographical theories of Enlightenment circles, he downplays Christian thought, particularly that of Latin Scholasticism. A true renewal of authentic philosophical elaboration only came with modern Eclecticism, which also constituted a development because the thinkers of the latest period of philosophy “freed themselves from an attachment to the schools, systems, and theories of former philosophers, and accepted only what they judged to be consonant with right reason” (p. 193).

**8.5.4.4** Created mainly for didactic purposes, Stöwe's textbook aims to present "the significance and fundamental importance of the history of philosophy in concise, dense paragraphs" so that all authors, or schools, are presented in their essentials, and so that any further necessary enquiry may be "reserved for oral clarification". The description of each author consists of a paragraph, printed in larger typescript, containing the basic notions about him. This is followed by a series of annotations or additional considerations in smaller type that deal with the main points in greater depth and are to a large extent an abridgement of Brucker's *Institutiones* (at times they are actual quotations from them). Pupils are thus provided, as the author says in the 'Preface', with the "philosophers' most significant propositions and opinions taken from the various fundamental parts of their systems, so that when explained orally, I can be more precise and further develop them, examine them in greater depth, and allow pupils to exercise their reflection and judgment in the best of possible ways" (pp. V–VI).

**8.5.5** On Stöwe's life and works: Meusel, VII, p. 676; *Adresskalender für Berlin*, s.v. 'Die Königliche Realschule', 1781, p. 230; 1782, p. 235; A.J. Hecker, *Kurzer Abriss des Geschichte der Königl. Real-Schule in den ertsen fünfziqe Jahren nach ihrer Stiftung* (Berlin, 1797), p. 61; O. Simon, *Abriss der Geschichte der Königlichen Realschule, 1747–1814* (Berlin, 1897).

The *Versuch* is mentioned by Geldsetzer, p. 184; Braun, p. 381; Schneider, p. 144.

## 8.6 Johann Gottfried Gurlitt (1754–1827)

### *Abriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*

**8.6.1** Johann Gottfried Gurlitt was born in Halle on 13th March, 1754. Soon after his birth his parents moved to Leipzig, where he received his education. In 1762 he attended the *Thomasschule*, and it was here that he began to study classical and oriental languages. As a result his main interest lay in philology and theology, while his production in the field of the historiography of philosophy was marginal and occasional. When he left the *Thomasschule* in 1772, Gurlitt had already published one work (*Explicatio hymni XLIII Davidici*, Halae, 1773). At the University of Leipzig he continued his philological studies under Christian August Crusius and Samuel F.N. Morus, and his philosophical studies with Ernst Platner, perfecting his knowledge of oriental languages, and publishing, at the same time, a number of essays on the Holy Scriptures. Gurlitt's religious education was marked by and reading of the *Sermons* by Georg Joachim Zollikofer (1730–1788), who based his teaching on thinkers such as Johann August Ernesti who were the promoters "of a conscious reduction of revealed religion to a natural, rational religion, and of this to ethics" (Merker, p. 255).

After he graduated, economic hardship prevented Gurlitt from taking up a university career; in 1778 he began teaching at the *Pädagogicum* of the former Benedictine convent in Berge, near Magdeburg, where from 1577 Jacob Andreä (1528–1590) had established the centre of the *Konkordienformel* of the Lutheran

Church. In his early teaching days Gurlitt encountered some difficulties, above all with his superiors at the convent in Berge, because of his freedom of thought; however, these problems were overcome, his work was acknowledged, and in 1796 he became director of the convent itself. He taught ancient history, archeology, the history of Greek and Roman literature, and the history of philosophy. It was as a teacher of the history of philosophy that he prepared the *Abriss*. His occupation as a teacher did not prevent him from continuing his philological and theological studies and approaching the same subjects cultivated by the Pre-romantics: he reviewed Winckelmann's work on ancient art and translated some of the Ossian poems.

Gurlitt remained at the convent of Berge until 1802, when he was invited by the Hamburg city council to take up the chair of oriental languages at the Academic Gymnasium and the directorship of the *Johanneum*; he also held the chair of theology there after he had been awarded the title of *doctor honoris causa* in Holy Scriptures by the Theology Faculty in Helmstädt. Gurlitt also continued to promote a reform of studies which he had begun when he was in Berge. He died in Hamburg on 14 June, 1827.

**8.6.2** As we have said, Gurlitt's studies mainly focused on philology and theology, but his interests extended to the fields of philosophy, archeology, history, and biblical exegesis as well. Moreover, his bibliography also contains works of didactic interest, including the two compendiums of the history of philosophy and philosophy: the *Abriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Zum Gebrauch der Lehrvorträge* (Leipzig, 1786), pp. xvi–280; and the *Abriss der Philosophie. Zum Gebrauch der Lehrvorträge* (Magdeburg, 1788). His 'Einige Bemerkungen und Conjecturen des Joh. Albert Fabricius in des Philosophen Seneca Schriften, ein Anekdoton', *Teutsches Museum*, 1794, II/4, pp. 337–373, also concern the history of philosophy.

**8.6.3** The Leipzig Enlightenment, with its many interests and its idea of a free rationalism devoid of dogmatism, shaped Gurlitt's thought, which contains neither autonomous philosophical reflection nor any particular historiographical approach. In general he relied on his masters who, following Wolff and Thomasius, had sought "to correct the formalist edifice of Wolffian logic and gnoseology with injections of empiricism and sensationism" (Merker, pp. 125 and 257), moving closer to the theories of the so-called "popular philosophers". Gurlitt was also aware of the developments of post-Bruckerian German historiography of philosophy, particularly that of Garve, Meiners, and Tiedemann, in the years between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

The history of philosophy "is the chronologically and systematically ordered sum of the changes that all concepts and knowledge, about man, the world and the divine, which form the content of philosophy, have undergone from the oldest times until our own" (*Abriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, p. 1). Gurlitt's intention in writing the *Abriss* was to "abridge the history of philosophy not as the history of philosophers, as Leibniz would say, referring to the customary manner of dealing, but as an authentic history of philosophy, of its changes, its destiny,

its improvements, regressions, and new improvements, and also of its individual masters and the destiny of the schools of philosophers, with a constant indication of the general course undertaken by the development of the human intellect” (p. III). Hence the break with Laertius’ model is consolidated, even at textbook level, and we can detect a movement towards the new historiographical concepts that were just beginning to disseminate and which, together with Brucker’s, were already a point of reference even for textbooks.

The *Abriss* is a compilation taken not only from Brucker and Stanley, but also, and principally, from the writings of Meiners, Platner, Garve, Tiedemann, Cäsar, and Büsching. Gurlitt’s aim was to “favour and facilitate the possibility of a view of the whole and of the single parts, and to enquire into the general spirit (*Geist*) that predominated in each school, and thence to translate the whole, as best I could, from a general point of view” (pp. IV–V).

### 8.6.4 *Abriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*

**8.6.4.1** After the initial ‘Dedication’ to Morus, Platner, and Zollikofer, the *Abriss* presents a ‘Preface’ (pp. I–XVI) and some introductory pages, ‘Vorerinnerungen’ on the concept of the history of philosophy, followed by a bibliography of the general philosophical histories (pp. 1–2 and 2–5). A true ‘Introduction’ then follows (pp. 4–9), which we shall speak of shortly. The historiographical treatment that follows is subdivided into “nations” and “schools”, in six chapters, from Barbarian philosophy to Gurlitt’s own time (he includes Kant, Hume, and the Scottish common sense school). Each paragraph within the chapters has a bibliography. At the end there are two well-organized ‘Bibliographical Appendices’: the first on the history of the concepts of God, the world, and the soul (pp. 269–270); and the second on the history of logic, psychology, physics, metaphysics, and moral philosophy (pp. 270–272); finally, there are additional bibliographies concerning certain paragraphs of the various chapters (pp. 272–280).

**8.6.4.2** Gurlitt structures his compendium of the history of philosophy on the general history of mankind, which he briefly summarizes in the ‘Introduction’ (pp. 4–9). The “natural history of man in his physical, moral, and psychological formation” comprises the transition from the hunter/gatherer phase to that of social life and the invention of the arts and sciences. Similarly, in the millennia after the first manifestations of human culture, philosophy began its course, expressing itself in concepts founded first on the use of the senses, then on the use of the imagination in the age of poetry, and, finally, on the use of pure intellect. After the age of pure intellect and abstraction, there were moments when philosophical culture fell into quibbling and idle disputes. This was a time of a loss of good taste, of ill-health and the subsequent death and burial of philosophy, but from its tomb, through a general upheaval of things (*Umwälzung der Dinge*), it then re-awoke, returning to its former simplicity and naturalness (p. 6).

By applying this general course of humanity to the “real history of philosophy” we obtain the following eras: the birth and early infancy of philosophy among the peoples of the East (the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Persians, etc.); the early childhood of philosophy under “the oldest Greek bards” (Orpheus); its childhood (the age of the Seven Wises); youth (the Ionics, Pythagoreans, and Eleatics); maturity (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle); the old age and death of philosophy (the Alexandrines, Arabs, and medieval Scholastics); the reawakening of philosophy in Italy, France, England, Germany and Holland, from the Renaissance (1453) to Gurlitt’s own times.

In the bibliography to the brief introductory outline of the history of mankind, on which the history of philosophy and its division into periods is modelled, Gurlitt refers to the classical eighteenth-century works on the history of human civilization and the history of language (Rousseau, Ferguson, Herder, Robertson, and Monboddo); there is no mention of Vico, but the German translation, edited by K.A. Cäsar, of the work by Paolo Zambaldi, *Saggi per servire alla storia dell’uomo* (Venice, 1767), is cited (see above, 8.4.2).

**8.6.4.3** Gurlitt’s compendium devotes a great deal of attention to Greek thought, where the grouping into schools tends to disappear. “So-called” Barbarian philosophy comes first (pp. 11–24), but Greek philosophy soon follows. We still have “Tonic philosophy” and “Pythagorean or Italic philosophy”, but with much smaller and more viable groups, while the “spirit” (*Geist*) of the philosophy of the time is strongly emphasized in the denomination of the various epochs of Greek thought: the poetic spirit (from Orpheus to Lycurgus), the political spirit of philosophy (from Lycurgus to Thales), the physical and speculative spirit (the Ionics, Pythagoreans, and Eleatics), the dialectic spirit (the Sophists), the practical spirit (Socrates and the Socratics, including the Stoics, Epicureans, and Academics, headed by Plato), the systematic spirit (Aristotle and the Peripatetics), the sceptic spirit (from Pyrrho to Sextus Empiricus), and finally the “syncretism” of Neoplatonic philosophy. The longest sections, though still in an abridged form, are dedicated to the Stoic (pp. 78–98) and the Peripatetic school (pp. 113–138). Roman and medieval philosophy represent the old age and the demise of philosophy; it then re-arises with the Renaissance, but is renewed only in the modern age, in England with Bacon, who is the Socrates of the new era (p. 220), in France and Holland with Descartes and the Cartesians, and in Germany with Thomasius and Leibniz. Gurlitt still calls the Moderns by the Bruckerian name of “eclectics”, but judgments prevail that reveal the influence of a new historiographical age, where names like Garve, Meiners, and Tiedemann are given a place of honour.

The considerations that Gurlitt expresses on modern philosophy are important (pp. 253–261), almost a conclusion to his brief notes. Modern philosophy is characterized by an ‘extension’ (*Erweiterung*) of its fields, comprising the history of humanity (Hume, Ferguson, Iselin, Zambaldi, Meiners, and others), the history of philosophy “elaborated in a more philosophical way”, psychology and anthropology (Meiners, Platner and others), aesthetics (Baumgarten, Meier, Sulzer, Eberhard, Eschenburg, and others), pedagogy (Rousseau, Basedow), physiognomy (Lavater), mimicry (Engel), the philosophy of language (Harris, de Brosses, Monboddo,

Adelung, Meiners, and others), and the attempt to create a specific philosophical language (Leibniz, John Wilkins, Joh. Joachim Becher, George Dalgarno, and others). A second characteristic of modern thought is the improvement (*Verbesserung*) in dealing with problems: a leading of philosophy back “to man and to the things that concern his perfection and his happiness”; a revival of the Socratic spirit; the perception of a close link between the philosophy of the world and life and the philosophy of the school, through the study of nature and man, by means of observation, experience, ethnology, etc.; a “discouragement of a haughty and universal dogmatism and the introduction of a cautious and wise scepticism concerning those things that seem incomprehensible and unfathomable to the human intellect”. Recalling Pascal and the contrast between the Pyrronians and the Dogmatics, Gurlitt speaks of a “happy intermediate course, on the part of modern philosophy, between infinite doubt and omniscient dogmatism” (pp. 257–258, and note). Finally, the third characteristic of modern thought is the greater diffusion (*Ausbreitung*) of the study of philosophy among a larger number of classes of cultured people and hence a greater philosophical influence on theology, jurisprudence, legislation (Montesquieu, Beccaria), the humanist sciences (Heyne), and poetry (Haller, Wieland).

Gurlitt ends his compendium with a brief “history of scepticism in modern times” (pp. 262–268), almost as if he wishes to go back to what he had already pointed out. Thus, starting with the methodical scepticism of Descartes, he arrives at Huet, Bayle, Voltaire, and Hume and closes by mentioning the arguments against scepticism, with a rich bibliography, arriving at the discussions against Hume by the Scottish school of common sense, Platner, and a review of Jacobi’s *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Moses Mendelssohn*.

**8.6.4.4** Given the nature of Gurlitt’s *Abriss*, it is not necessary to say much about his methodology: he abridges and frequently restricts himself to a few brief notes since he is writing for schools. However, one should not forget his orderly way of presenting his subject according to a framework that includes the life and character of the author, or spirit and nature of a school, the author’s system; the history of his doctrine or the history of the school founded by him; and a bibliography, which is usually very detailed, including treatises and general histories of philosophy, the editions of the authors’ texts, and a critical literature that is always up-to-date (pp. 272–280).

**8.6.5** On Gurlitt’s life and works: ADB, X, pp. 182–185; Ersch-Gruber, XCVII/1, pp. 365–370; Meusel, II, p. 724; IX, p. 482; XI, p. 305; XIII, pp. 523–524; XVII, p. 825, XX, pp. 509–511; E.Ph. Calmberg, *Historia Johannei Hamburgensis* (Hamburg, 1829; German transl., Hamburg, 1829, with an autobiography of Gurlitt); Kayser, I, p. 461.

On the historical and cultural background: H. Kriewald, *Ferdinand zur Glückseligkeit. Aus der Geschichte einer Magdeburger Freimaurerloge* (Magdeburg, 1992); U. Förster, *Unterricht und Erziehung an den Magdeburger Pädagogien zwischen 1775 und 1824* (Frankfurt, 1998).

The *Abriss* was reviewed in ALZ, III (1788), no. 173, cols 177–179; and is recalled by Ernesti, pp. 104–105; Carus, p. 85, who judged its form and content



favourably, as did Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, p. 162. The *Abriss* is mentioned by Freyer, p. 68; Gumposch, p. 603; Geldsetzer, pp. 45, 140 and 169; Braun, pp. 179 note 144, 184 and 381, and by Schneider, pp. 61, 137 and 204.

## 8.7 Franz Xaver Gmeiner (1752–1822)

### *Litterargeschichte des Ursprungs und Fortganges der Philosophie*

**8.7.1** Franz Xaver Gmeiner was born in Studenitz in Styria on 6th January, 1752. He studied law and philosophy in Marburg and Graz and was influenced by the jurist of Wolffian inclination Karl A. von Martini (1726–1800). In 1777 he obtained his doctorate in Graz, after having been ordained to the priesthood the previous year. Immediately after his degree, he began his university career and after some years as a temporary professor, he obtained the chair of the History of the Church (1787). The importance of this chair deserves to be recalled because this was the period in which the enlightened absolutism of Joseph II of Hapsburg witnessed its greatest period of expansion, characterizing an entire era (the *Josephinismus*). Gmeiner cultivated his interest in philosophy and its history above all at the beginning of his career, when the Jesuits' attack on the approach to philosophical teaching imposed on universities by the Austrian Empire was still raging. In the following years, Gmeiner's interests focused on other fields: law, ecclesiastic history, and theology. From 1806 to 1818 Gmeiner was director of philosophy studies in Austria. After retiring from all his activities, he died in Graz in 1822.

**8.7.2** Gmeiner's philosophical interests concern only a minor part of his production and appear at the beginning of his academic career. His main works in this field are: the *Eingangsrede über die Lehre der Litteraturgeschichte* (Graz, 1775), where he examines the relationship between literary history, aesthetics (*Geschmack*), philosophy, and morals (*Sitten*); and the *Litterargeschichte des Ursprungs und Fortganges der Philosophie, wie auch aller philosophischen Sekten und Systemen* (Graz: J.G. Weingand und Fr. Ferstl, 1788–1789, 2 vols). For his works of a historical, theological, and legal nature, see the lists of works by Heinsius and Kayser.

**8.7.3** Gmeiner's philosophical and historiographical reflection is based on the German Enlightenment, particularly Wolff, as was nearly all Austrian culture under Joseph II, who had made the thinker from Halle the master of philosophy to counteract Scholastic thought (*Barock-Scholastik*). Moreover, thanks to its systematic method, Wolffian reflection had also been adopted as the basis for teaching philosophy and law in the universities. Indeed, "it was the work by Wolff, in its widespread use, that contributed decisively to the establishment of the concept of the State that lay at the roots of the Hapsburg reforms; in them the motif of happiness, which was already a central element, reinterpreted by Leibniz's philosophical view, became an individual's duty, and therefore a subject's right in a State, which, in turn might then intervene in all spheres of human activity to ensure it orderly

execution for the common well-being” (Negrelli, *L’illuminista diffidente*, pp. 19–20). Fully part of this climate, Gmeiner accepted its implications, not to mention its consequences, as we can see in his later legal works, revealing from his youth that he firmly and enthusiastically embraced the Enlightenment theories: “We live today everywhere in happy times when the shadows have been dispersed, when all that is beautiful in languages and literature is available to youth” (*Eingangsrede*, p. 8).

In Gmeiner’s textbook (*Litterargeschichte des Ursprungs und Fortganges der Philosophie*) there is no precise discussion of the concept of philosophy, but it does emerge when, in the ‘Einleitung’ to the first volume, the origins of philosophy itself are analyzed in Bruckerian fashion. It is also possible to recall the work by the Wolffian Friederich Christian Baumeister (1709–1785), which Gmeiner cites when speaking of the concept of the history of philosophy.

For Gmeiner, philosophy arose and developed from experience and sensible knowledge to abstract concepts and an enquiry into the fundamental cause: “Just as man’s first concepts and urgent needs were physical, so also the knowledge that was of assistance to him was initially only sensible”: “sensible knowledge or experience was the first foundation of erudition (*Gelehrsamkeit*)”. Only later, from “some concepts did he arrive at those abstracts and universals from which the arts and sciences arose” (*Litterargeschichte*, I, pp. 9–10). This process became possible thanks to the development of man’s capacity for logic, since “the resemblance among some things led to universal concepts and also gave rise to the observation that certain results came about only and always in certain conditions and in the presence of certain things (*Dinge*), and this provided the first determination for the concept of a foundation, and soon man began to seek the fundamental cause of events. It thus became possible to understand and outline why things are as they are and not in another way, and so a philosophical knowledge was obtained” (I, pp. 10–11). This knowledge progressed by linking diverse truths by means of rigorous syllogisms, and a system was formulated. “Philosophical knowledge unified man by reflection and meditation, and gradually made him progress until he attained a complete series of truths through a chain of syllogisms, subordinating them in such a way as to make one depend continuously upon another. We call this chain of truths a system, or system of doctrines. In this way, the human intellect developed towards philosophy (*Weltweisheit*), that is, towards the science of all possible things (*aller möglichen Dinge*), of the how and why they may be possible” (I, p. 12).

In other words, philosophy went through the following stages: from man’s needs and from sensible knowledge to abstract, universal concepts, from common or historical knowledge to erudite knowledge (*Gelehrte*) or philosophy (I, p. 15). This is to be found for the first time in the Ionic school, where Gmeiner sees the true origin of philosophy. Therefore philosophy (*Weltweisheit*) “is the science of things through their causes, and science requires that from unquestionable propositions a complete series of other propositions may be deduced by means of rigorous syllogisms” (I, p. 16).

Gmeiner’s historiographical research is fully compatible with his view of the origins and progress of philosophy, which is why he uses Buddeus and Brucker as his models. In Gmeiner’s textbook there is no theoretical consideration of the

concept of the history of philosophy, but we can reconstruct it by examining the work, and it is exactly the same as Brucker's. The history of philosophy is the gradual maturing of the human intellect, to use Brucker's terminology; it therefore indicates the progressive extension of the human capacity to acquire knowledge, according to the cycles of development. The first cycle reaches its culmination with Aristotle, the second in the modern age, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with Leibniz and Wolff, returning to its early splendour, or even surpassing it; in between there is the decline of the Middle Ages, when philosophy was not a guide but played the role of "dictator" (*Eingangsrede*, p. 13) and witnessed its own degeneration along with that of the sciences.

Gmeiner further believes that writing the history of philosophy means observing and describing the progress made by the sciences, and he deals with this in the 'Appendices'. In addition to the history of philosophy, therefore, he also presents an examination of the progress of science, which was considerable in ancient times and in the modern age but was lacking in the Middle Ages. The history of philosophy is conceived by Gmeiner as a *Litterargeschichte*, and he explains the meaning of this expression with a lengthy quotation from Baumeister: "The *historia litteraria*, which should describe the vicissitudes of the sciences and of books as well as the lives of scholars, has the primary purpose of acquiring the truths attained by the ancients and of providing the means by which the *ars heuristic sive inveniendi* can be enhanced" (F. Chr. Baumeister, *Institutiones philosophiae rationalis methodo Wolfii adornatae*, Venice, 1765, p. 200, which quotes Bk. I, Ch. 4 of Bacon's *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum*). It reproduces the Baconian concept of *historia litteraria*, within which the history of philosophy must find its own place and which was so much in favour in European historiography in the seventeenth century (see *Models*, II, pp. 163–171).

Brucker, however, had gone well beyond the concept of *historia litteraria* and had distinguished it from *historia philosophica*: the history of philosophy is not the history of erudition, Brucker had stated in the 'Dissertatio praeliminaris' to the *Historia critica philosophiae*, but is the history of those reflections that are founded on a concept of philosophy (see *Models*, II, pp. 484–494). There is no trace in the 'Einleitung' to the first volume of Gmeiner's work of this concept of the history of philosophy, which was so widely discussed and studied in German historiography at the beginning of the eighteenth century (by Gerhard, Heumann, and Brucker).

### 8.7.4 *Litterargeschichte des Ursprungs und Fortganges der Philosophie*

**8.7.4.1** The first volume of the *Litterargeschichte* contains the history of ancient philosophy before Christ: 'Von den Schicksalen der Philosophie vor Christi Geburt' (I, pp. 15–375). It opens with a 'Vorrede' (I, pp. I–III), a 'Verzeichniss der Hauptstücke' (I, pp. IV–VII), and an 'Einleitung' (I, pp. 1–14). The subject is divided into three "sections", each of which comprises several chapters (*Hauptstücke*), subdivided in turn into paragraphs numbered progressively.

The first section, ‘Von der alten Weltweisheit verschiedener Völker’ (I, pp. 15–68), of seven chapters deals with the history of pre-Greek Barbaric philosophy, that is to say, the types of philosophy from its rise and establishment among the Chaldeans, Babilonians, Assyrians, Indians, Arabs, Persians, Phoenicians, Syriacs, Hebrews, Egyptians, Chinese, Germans, and Gauls, using the traditional division into geographical areas and “nations”. The second section, ‘Von der griechischen und italienischen Philosophie’ (I, pp. 69–142), in seven chapters, describes the rise and dissemination of the Greek philosophy of the two main schools, the Ionic and Italic. The third section, ‘Von den Akademikern’ (I, pp. 143–375), deals in 15 chapters with the development of Greek philosophy from Socrates to the Epicureans; in these chapters, Gmeiner depicts the historical background to the main thinkers and systems, including Plato and Aristotle and all the schools found in the Greek world.

The first volume also contains an ‘Anhang von einigen mathematischen Erfindungen vor Christi Geburt’, placed at the end (I, pp. 376–404), where Gmeiner examines the progress made by the sciences (geometry, mechanics, optics, astronomy, geography and nautical art, gnomonics, chronology (*Zeitrechnung*), and land and naval architecture) in the pre-Christian age, besides an alphabetic Index of the names and topics treated (12 unnumbered pages).

The second volume, ‘Von den Schicksalen der Philosophie nach Christi Geburt’ (II, pp. 1–696), also comprises three “sections”, preceded by a ‘Verzeichniss der Hauptstücke’ (4 unnumbered pages) and by an ‘Einleitung’ (II, pp. 1–110), where Gmeiner outlines a ‘Kurze Übersicht des Zustandes der Philosophie von Christi Geburt bis auf unsere Zeit’, a summary of the history of philosophy from the birth of Christ up to the eighteenth century.

In the first section, ‘Von der weitem Fortpflanzung der vor Christi Geburt entsandenen Sekten’ (II, pp. 111–298), Gmeiner examines in five chapters the developments of the various schools (Pythagorean, Cynic, Sceptic, Platonic, and Aristotelian) throughout the centuries, starting from the Roman age, that is from before the birth of Christ, to the eighteenth century, when there were still philosophical theories based on the Greek schools.

In the second section, ‘Von jenen Philosophen, die einzig die Naturlehre bearbeitet, und keine Sekte gestiftet haben’ (II, pp. 299–448), there are two chapters that trace the history of those thinkers who from the Roman period to the sixteenth century were engaged in the study either of natural history (Pliny, Claudianus, K. Gesner, Aldrovandi, A. Kircher, C. Acosta), astronomy (Ptolemy, Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Tycho Brahe), or medicine (Harvey), and of those who in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries enquired into physics (*Naturlehre*) or some parts of it (II, p. 343). In this second chapter he also includes Gassendi, R. Boyle, P. Van Musschenbroek, B. Franklin, Buffon, Halley, Borelli, Montgolfier, and others.

In the third section, ‘Von den nach Christi Geburt entstandenen Sekten’ (II, pp. 451–696), in 11 chapters Gmeiner traces the developments of those schools that emerged after the birth of Christ which did not explicitly refer to the ancient ones. The description opens with the Scholastics, Realists, and Nominalists (II, pp. 541–575), comprising Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Roscelin, Abelard, and

Biel; the Thomists and Scotists follow (II, pp. 475–487); then there are the Anti-scholastics or “Novators” (II, pp. 488–520), a term used to denote Lull, Cardan, Ramus, Bacon, Telesio, Patrizi, Campanella, Bruno, and Agrippa. It then moves on to the chemical philosophers and the theosophs (Paracelsus and Bodenstein) (II, pp. 520–532), Cartesian philosophy with its later supporters and detractors (II, pp. 533–557), Spinozism or Pantheism (II, pp. 558–565), Leibnizian and Wolffian philosophy with its followers (II, pp. 565–601), and Newton and Boscovich’s physics (II, pp. 602–632). The ninth chapter is devoted to the “reformers” of practical philosophy and legal erudition of a philosophical type (*philosophische Rechtgelehrsamkeit*), that is to Grotius, Hobbes, Pufendorf, Thomasius, and the followers of Machiavelli (II, pp. 633–675). The last chapters, on the other hand, give an overview of the state of philosophy in non-European countries (II, pp. 676–685) and of European philosophical academies (II, pp. 686–696).

The second volume closes, like the first, with an ‘Anhang von einigen mathematischen Erfindungen nach Christi Geburt’ (II, pp. 697–736), where Gmeiner dwells on the various scientific discoveries in arithmetic, geometry, geography, infinitesimal calculus, and mechanics that were made after Christ’s birth. Volume II closes with an alphabetic Index of the names and subjects dealt with (18 unnumbered pages). The exposition is accompanied by several explanatory notes and bibliographical references in smaller print.

**8.7.4.2** Gmeiner subdivides the history of philosophy into two great periods: the pre-Christian period and the post-Christian period. The internal division in the first period correlates two different criteria. The first, of a geographical nature, enables him to distinguish between Barbarian philosophy (Chaldean, Sybarite, Phoenician, Syriac, Hebrew, Egyptian, Indian, Chinese, German, and Gallic) and Greek philosophy, which began with the Ionic and Italic schools. This chronological criterion then leads to a division of Greek thought into two phases, Pre-Socratic and Post-Socratic. The three sections in the first volume respect these criteria.

The internal division in the second period, which does not follow Brucker’s organization, is of a very general nature and is carried out on the basis of the concept of “school”. We thus have first the description of the ancient schools (from the beginning of the age of Vernacular Latin to the eighteenth century); then there is a presentation of the philosophers who did not found schools and were in actual fact scientists rather than philosophers (Pliny, Claudianus, Aldrovandi, Ptolemy, Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Harvey, etc.); in the third section the schools and thinkers from Scholasticism to Wolff are examined.

**8.7.4.3** Gmeiner’s textbook does not present any new or original historiographical theories, but generally relies on the works of Brucker and previous or contemporary historiographers (Fabricius, Feder). He repeats their theories, summarizing them without justifying his choices. Philosophy did not start with Adam since it is not possible to retrace any authentic philosophizing on the part of the first man in the Bible (*Litterargeschichte*, I, p. 16). There was no complete philosophy among the Barbarians, either, even if the Egyptians, who adopted mathematics, geometry, and astronomy from the Assyrians and Babylonians, undoubtedly contributed to a progress towards philosophy (I, p. 41). Philosophy was born with Thales because he

was the first to have a concept of philosophy founded on mathematics (I, p. 69); but it was above all with Pythagoras that philosophy was modelled on mathematics and hence reached its true beginnings, and it was then continued by other thinkers and other schools up to Socrates.

Philosophy from the time of Socrates to that of the Epicureans is called that “of the Academics”: this is a generic term that is not taken in the strict sense of the Sceptics, but is not fully explained, either. In adopting it, however, Gmeiner is obliged to make some divisions, but these are merely the classical ones (Socratics, Platonists, Peripatetics, Sceptics, Stoics, Epicureans, etc.) (I, pp. 143–144). Some theories concerning the major thinkers, which we cite, underline the Bruckerean origin of Gmeiner’s textbook. Socrates is appreciated for the scientific form that he gave to moral theory and for the discovery of the *argumentum ab inductione* (I, pp. 148 and 167). His teachings, however, lost their purity with the later schools; even Plato revealed an eclectic form of thought, taking logic from the Pythagoreans, physics from the Heracliteans, and morals from the Socratics, offering reflections that are too extensive and unsystematic (I, p. 197).

Aristotle, who Gmeiner sees as representing the pinnacle of ancient philosophy, is judged to be “the new sun of the philosophical world” and “the prince of philosophers”. After initially following Plato, he later ridiculed his ideas and formed a system based on the study of the nature of things (*Grundphilosophie*) (I, pp. 198, 222, 223, and 224). Aristotle’s importance is underlined for the very fact that he “considers all parts of philosophy scientifically, and he thus surpassed all his predecessors”, founding a system (in dividing philosophy into theoretical and practical) and placing logic as the foundation stone of this system. Gmeiner, therefore, repeats well-known theories, both in this case and as far as other ancient thinkers are concerned.

The general historiographical theories about the Christian period also reflect the authors cited above. In Gmeiner, however, there is an attempt to group the thinkers together into three classes. To the first class belong those who in the course of centuries went back to the Greek schools: this group includes Roman, medieval, and modern thinkers (for the Pythagoreans, for example, Apollonius of Tyana, Pico della Mirandola, and J. Reuchlin; for the Platonists, Plotinus, St. Justin, Bessarion, and Marsilio Ficino; and for the Sceptics, Sextus Empiricus, P. Huet, F. Sánchez, P. Bayle, etc.). To the second class belong those who developed philosophical reflection, even though they started from enquiries into nature, and did not create new schools (see above, 8.7.4.1). Finally there are those who founded new approaches in an original way; this class includes medieval thinkers (Thomists, Scotists, Realists, and Nominalists), the Humanists, and the Moderns, generically defined as “Anti-Scholastics or Novators”, that is to say those who opposed Scholasticism and “tried to give rise to a purer philosophy. In a more general sense of innovators, we could thus list Gassendi, Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff, and Newton”. This denomination is, however, also used in a stricter sense, that is to say for those who “have undertaken corrections either to the whole of philosophy or to some parts of it, yet have not founded any sect”. Here Gmeiner seems to want to distinguish the thinkers of Humanism and the Renaissance, that is, the

Anti-Scholastics (Lull, Bacon, Telesio, Patrizi, Campanella, Bruno, etc.) from the moderns, who “were at the same time promoters of a new philosophical sect and provided a complete system of philosophy” (III, p. 489).

Generally speaking, the Roman period did not have a philosophy of its own but revived, and at times developed (Plotinus and the Neoplatonists), the thoughts of the Greek schools; medieval philosophy is judged negatively, following Brucker, while Gmeiner sees in the Anti-Scholastics and modern thinkers a revival of true philosophizing, undertaken above all by Leibniz and Wolff, the apogee of modern philosophy. The two greatest German thinkers had the merit of having founded a philosophical school without basing themselves on Descartes, and of having introduced the principle of sufficient reason into philosophy (Leibniz: see II, p. 572); Wolff, in particular, is important for having endowed Leibniz’s philosophy with a system and for having coupled Aristotle’s principle of non-contradiction with Leibniz’s principle of sufficient reason (II, p. 593). In modern thought, Newton and Boscovich’s physics are highly important because they contributed to offering a scientific view of nature.

For Gmeiner true philosophy is reached after historical knowledge or the knowledge of facts, when knowledge based on a strictly interlocked chain of syllogisms and on mathematical statements is attained. This is the general theory of his textbook, which sees progress or regression in philosophy on the basis of such a perspective; and this, we believe, is his reason for including scientists in the history of philosophy, that is those who investigated nature while reasoning mathematically. Gmeiner’s historiographical theories do not contribute any new ideas to the general history of philosophy and they respect the Wolffian approach to the concept of philosophy coherently. The very inclusion of scientists, even the most recent (B. Franklin), does not signify any new historiographic approach; however, the typical Enlightenment enthusiasm with which Gmeiner greets the new scientific discoveries, while still carefully listing the ancient ones, is noteworthy.

**8.7.4.4** For Gmeiner, the history of philosophy is a knowledge of life, events, reflections, and of the literature pertaining to philosophers and schools, and the concept of a speculation based rigorously on logic should emerge enabling the scholar to demonstrate this system, revealing at the same time the value of the sciences, especially mathematics and physics. His method was chosen on the basis of this aim. The life and works of every author are presented, and his contributions to a rigorous, rational system of enquiry are underlined. Thus, for example, Socrates is considered not only for his moral theory but also for having founded the *argumentum ab inductione*, and Plato’s links with mathematics are highlighted (I, pp. 167 and 198).

What is important for Gmeiner is to show how throughout the centuries, with steps forward (in ancient and modern philosophy) and backwards (the Middle Ages), philosophy progressed so far in the eighteenth century, with Leibniz, Wolff, and Newton, as to found a system of thought based on mathematics. Gmeiner appreciates, therefore, not only the philosophers but also the ‘scientists’ who in the course of time contributed to this process. The ‘Anhänge’ at the end of the

two volumes serve this aim fairly well. As a convinced Wolffian, Gmeiner helps himself freely to Brucker and to all Enlightenment literature, whether philosophical or scientific: of the authors mentioned, besides Brucker, we can find Buddeus, Fabricius, and Montesquieu, while there is little direct recourse to the works of the philosophers themselves despite the fact that he intended to outline a *Litterargeschichte*, that is a literary history.

**8.7.5** Gmeiner's textbook was not greeted favourably by critics: the work was considered outdated, since the most recent historiographical enquiries (by Tiedemann, Meiners, etc.) were not taken into consideration (cf. OAL, May, 1788, pp. 989–992), the second volume was said to lack clarity ("Gmeiner himself doesn't know what he wants": OAL, December, 1788, pp. 3269–3273), or critics even declared that there was no precise historiographical concept and that the way the work was divided up was "full of mistakes" (ALZ, 1789, pp. 336–338). Carus (p. 85) considered the *Litterargeschichte* to be just "a compilation taken from Brucker, without any critical worth and without any pragmatic use"; A. Posch (*Die kirchliche Aufklärung in Graz*, p. 160) and Braun (p. 381) were of the same opinion. However, the value of Gmeiner's textbook is not to be sought within the wider context of German culture but specifically in the Austrian one, which only then (1770–1790) began to free itself of Scholastic philosophy and seek new theories by means of Wolffian thought, revealing once again, in the historiographical field, just how valuable Brucker's work was.

**8.7.6** On Gmeiner's life and works: ADB, IV, p. 265; *Österreichisches biographisches Lexikon 1815–1950* (Graz and Cologne, 1959), II, p. 13; Meusel, II, pp. 582–584; XIII, p. 476; XVII, p. 732; XX/2, p. 383; Kayser, I, p. 394; Heinsius, I, pp. 136–137; DECGPh, pp. 407–408.

On the historical and cultural background: F. Krones, *Geschichte der kaiserlichen königlichen Universität Graz* (Graz, 1896); A. Posch, *Die kirchliche Aufklärung in Graz und an der Grazer Hochschule* (Graz, 1937), pp. 152–184; F. Maaß, *Der Josephinismus: Quellen zu seiner Geschichte in Österreich 1760–1790* (Vienna, 1951–1956), 3 vols; G. Negrelli, *L'illuminista diffidente: Giuseppismo e Restaurazione nel pensiero politico di Antonio de Giuliani* (Bologna, 1974); W. Sauer, *Österreichische Philosophie zwischen Aufklärung und Restauration* (Amsterdam, 1982), pp. 26–31 and 39; A. Freye: *Die Josephinischen Reformen in Österreich unter Maria Theresia und Joseph II. mit dem Schwerpunkt der Kirchenreform* (München 2007); *Josephinismus als Aufgeklärter Absolutismus*, ed. H. Reinalter (Vienna, 2008).

Reviews of the *Litterargeschichte*: OAL, no. 290 (1778), pp. 989–992; no. 297 (1788), pp. 3269–3273; ALZ, no. 150 (1789), pp. 336–338; ADBibl., no. 88/1 (1789), pp. 122–123; no. 116/1 (1794), p. 142. The work is mentioned by Ernesti, p. 105; Carus, p. 85; Gumposch, p. 261; Posch, *Die kirchliche Aufklärung*, pp. 159–160; Geldsetzer, p. 184; Braun, p. 381; F.M. Wimmer, 'Philosophiegeschichte in Österreich nach 1750', in *Verdrängter Humanismus – verzögerte Aufklärung. Österreichische Philosophie zur Zeit der Revolution und Restauration (1750–1820)*, ed. M. Benedikt (Vienna, 1992), pp. 117–118 and 133–134.



# Chapter 9

## The Göttingen School and *Popularphilosophie*

Mario Longo

### Introduction

#### (a) *Problems of periodization*

In the second half of the eighteenth century, in the final decades in particular, the variety of works on the history of philosophy produced in Germany was such that it is difficult to formulate a simple definition of the genre. This complexity also embraced the philosophical culture of the period, when the transition from one philosophical perspective to another became increasingly rapid and, towards the end of the century, feverish, as the political climate swiftly changed in response to the French transition from the ‘bourgeois’ Revolution to the Terror and Thermidor, and finally to Napoleon. In Germany we can take Göttingen as a point of reference for reflection and historiographical elaboration to illuminate many of the works produced in this period. Feder, Meiners, Hissmann, Tiedemann, and Buhle were all students, then professors, at the *Georgia Augusta*; Tiedemann taught in Marburg, not Göttingen, but he had been a pupil of Heyne, the tutelary deity of the University of Göttingen, and had formed a friendship and a community of interests there with Meiners which was to last through the years. Buhle, on the other hand, taught in Göttingen but his adherence to critical philosophy distinguished him from the other Göttingen historians who, in this respect, were closer to Eberhard, Adelung, and Garve, active in the universities – or other cultural circles – of Leipzig, Dresden, and Berlin. J. Freyer suggested expanding the criteria used for classifying these works, and he used the expression “later Enlightenment” (*Spätaufklärung*) as a common

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denominator for German works on the history of philosophy produced in the second half of the eighteenth century (see Freyer, pp. 49–69; Braun, pp. 159–203).

The progressive increase in the historiography of philosophy is clear. If we consider the three decades approximately spanning the period from the second edition of Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae* (1766–1767) to the publication of the first volume of Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1798), we notice that during the first phase, up until 1780, a few textbooks (by Formey, Büsching, Feder, Steinacher) were published in the form of brief outlines derived from the *Historia critica* or summaries of the textbook that Brucker himself had produced from his major work. A new period for German historiography of philosophy began in 1781 with Meiners' *Geschichte der Wissenschaften* (the same year that saw the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and Lessing's *Education of Humankind*).

During the 1780s, the production of textbooks became greater and more diverse: for Stöwe, Gurlitt, Adelung, Eberhard, Gmeiner, and for Meiners himself, Brucker was still a starting point as well as a point of reference, but in most cases he was merely seen as an interlocutor adopted polemically in order to defend a new approach or a different interpretation. Interest was no longer centred on the history of philosophical schools, but rather on the history of philosophical concepts and doctrines, and especially those related to inventions and scientific discoveries. At the same time, a critical philological approach took root, enacted with an intensity unknown in the two previous centuries at least, leading to new editions, translations, and commentaries on the philosophical works of Antiquity. In addition to the textbooks, significant works of a monographic character appeared, intended for purposes that went beyond the merely scholastic. It was thanks to this kind of study that Tiedemann, Buhle, and Tennemann discovered their vocation for writing the history of philosophy. After Brucker, they were the first to devote a large amount of their literary production and scientific activity to the history of philosophy. The last decade of the century saw the publication of sizeable works on the history of philosophy which have a general character and consist of several volumes. These works followed on from one another and progressively increased in their thematic scope and the number of their volumes: from the six tomes of Tiedemann's *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* (Marburg, 1791–1797) and the eight tomes of Buhle's *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Göttingen, 1796–1804) to the eleven tomes which make up Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie* (Leipzig, 1798–1819).

The increase in the number of works dealing with the historiography of philosophy during the 1780s and 1790s can be explained by the importance gradually attributed to the theoretical and methodological debate on the history of philosophy, which was concentrated in two phases: between the 1770s and 1780s, and during the last decade of the century. Here we can mention Ch. Garve's important dissertations, written in 1768–1770, the various contributions by M. Hissmann in 1777–1778, an essay by A.J. Hofmann which appeared in 1779, and a dissertation by F.V. Reinhard published in 1780. From 1791 onwards, G.G. Fülleborn's magazine *Beyträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie* published and compared contributions by different authors, mostly tending towards Kantianism, such as Reinhold, Göss, Grohmann, and Heydenreich, as well as Kant's continual interest in the problems of

the historiography of philosophy (his essay on *Progress in Metaphysics* dates from 1794). There is no doubt that reflection on the concept of the history of philosophy which developed in this period is a sign of the change taking place in the genre of the history of philosophy and indicates the new tendencies which were establishing themselves.

If we leave aside chronological progress and focus our attention on the contents, we notice that, at the end of the century, two different directions had emerged in German historiography of philosophy which eventually found mature expression in the contemporary works produced by Meiners and Tiedemann on the one hand, and those by Buhle and Tennemann on the other. In the background to the former tendency is the so-called *Popularphilosophie*, a typical expression of the German later Enlightenment, which mediates the tradition of Leibnizian and Wolffian philosophy using the themes of English empiricism and French sensationalism; Buhle and Tennemann, on the other hand, were inclined to adopt the perspective of Kant's critical philosophy. The fact that Tiedemann was not only a historian of philosophy but also an exponent of those German philosophers who opposed Kant; that he intentionally remained detached from the theoretical elaboration of the concept and method of the historiography of philosophy put forward by the Kantians in the same years in which he published his *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*; and that, owing to this latter reason too, he was criticized and marginalized, can generate the impression that, subsequent to the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, an opposition arose between a Kantian historiography of philosophy and a non-Kantian or anti-Kantian historiography, as a consequence of the division created within the philosophical world by the dissemination of the new system.<sup>1</sup> It clearly appears that, in this opposition, Tiedemann had everything to lose: his polemic against transcendental idealism might look ridiculous at the very moment when quite different forms of idealism were establishing themselves; and his work risked appearing "not in accordance with the genius of the time", to reverse the ill-considered judgement with which Feder swiftly disposed of Kant's *Critique*.<sup>2</sup> In reality, the historiographical works produced by Meiners, Eberhard, and Tiedemann

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<sup>1</sup>In the 'Preface' to his *Prolegomena* (Ak. A., IV, p. 255), Kant severely condemns those historians of philosophy who are either unable or unwilling to be philosophers; in fact, his attack is aimed at his critics (Feder, Garve, Eberhard . . .).

<sup>2</sup>Cf. J.G.H. Feder's *Leben, Natur und Grundsätze* (Leipzig, 1825), p. 118: "As I judge the question today, I made an unforgivable mistake. If I had imagined the great success of this work, I would not have made the mistake of declaring it not in accordance with the spirit of the time; I would have judged it with the greatest diligence, and perhaps the course of things would have been different". According to the well-known review written by Garve but reworked by Feder (*Zugabe zu den Göttingischen Anzeigen*, 1782, I, pp. 40–48), Kant was wrong both with respect to the "natural way of thinking" and to the "natural way of expressing in words"; see the conclusion of the review itself, p. 48: "And even if, accepting the radical thesis of idealism, all that about which we can know and say anything is resolved into representations and laws of thought, if the representations thus modified in us and combined according to certain laws are precisely that which we call objects and world; then why should one wage war on this universal form of expression? Why and by what right [should one assert] the idealistic distinction?".

preceded the histories by Buhle and Tennemann and, moreover, responded to reasons and projects which were developing independently of the philosophical tendency which was to prevail at the end of the century. This production should therefore be studied independently and understood within the framework of its specific source of inspiration.

(b) *The philosophical culture*

The group of historians of philosophy active in Germany during the second half of the eighteenth century belongs to the phase that Wundt has defined as “the third generation of the Enlightenment” (1750–1780). This phase possesses well-defined features which are particular to it and distinguish it from the previous age (1720–1750), dominated by Wolffianism, as well as from the following age, during which the philosophical issues focused on the debate initiated by Kant and were marked by the prompt affirmation of critical philosophy (cf. Wundt, pp. 265–341). The starting point for understanding this phase of German philosophy is not a comparison with Kant, because, in its formation, this phase was independent from the themes of critical philosophy, and, if anything bears some analogy with pre-critical Kant. However, this independence should not be emphasized to such an extent as to conceal any link with other preceding or subsequent trends of thought. With respect to certain themes, such as the central importance of the anthropological doctrine and the pragmatic ideal, a continuity can clearly be seen with the earlier phase of the German Enlightenment – the age of Christian Thomasius; in other respects, as regards the aesthetic doctrine for example, we can see an analogy with the issues pertaining to critical philosophy and idealism. During the last decade of the century, despite the animated philosophical debates and controversies, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Idealism were phenomena which were diversely interconnected and interwoven. Particularly evident too is the link between German and European philosophy of this period, notably Anglo-French thought. Göttingen was open to English culture on a political and institutional level too, since, together with the province of Hanover, it was a possession of the British Crown, while Berlin, with its Prussian Academy of Sciences, was dominated by Frenchmen or French expatriates. Translations of foreign works represent a sizeable portion of the works published and frequently appeared immediately after the original works.

In this cultural interweave, the doctrine which played a central role in philosophical questions was no longer ontology but the ‘study of man’: “The new epoch was no longer concerned with the science of being and its ever valid forms, but with the science of man in his ever changing forms. The leading science was no longer logic or metaphysics but anthropology. While previous thought developed in a tension from the world towards God, a tension involving man as well, the new tendency took man as its centre, and judged God and the world on this basis” (Wundt, pp. 265–266). This new dimension of research did not only concern the philosophical field *sensu stricto*, in which it led to the predominance of psychology compared with other philosophical disciplines, but also literature and art, and it even imparted a direction to scientific enquiry, which opened itself up to new horizons thanks to the emergence of what can be termed the ‘life sciences’ – pedagogy, economics, linguistics, ethnography, and physiognomy.

A special concern for man and his concrete individual being – historical and physical, moral and psychological – was the benchmark for the various cultural elements of the age, and was shared by figures like Wieland, Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder, and Hamann (poets, men of letters, and art historians), besides philosophers and moralists like Garve, Nicolai, and Mendelssohn, all influential and famous, each of whom could epitomize the period. None of them was directly active in the schools, but they all – intentionally or otherwise – operated outside the academic world, although they kept in close connection with it and frequently engaged in arguments against it. This circumstance should not be considered as the sign of a rupture between the world of education and broader educational culture; indeed, in the later eighteenth century, German universities went through the same process of cultural renewal which was taking place in the fields of literature and the sciences, shared the same ideals, and overtly committed themselves to worldly matters, as stated in the title of a well-known review of the time: *Der Philosoph für die Welt*.

The editor of this review was Johann Jacob Engel, a friend and admirer of Lessing, who sought the collaboration of the most renowned “popular philosophers”, such as Garve, Mendelssohn, and Eberhard. The phenomenon defined as “popular philosophy” has long been neglected and underestimated: historians of philosophy have only shown a certain interest in some exponents of this trend of thought, with particular reference to questions relating to Kantianism. This historiographical attitude is now showing some signs of change: W. Schneiders, for example, believes that “popular philosophy” represents the climax of a trend of thought which spans the period from the Renaissance up to Kant and which, in its effort to root philosophy in the world and secularize it, established the need to make it suitable, in its form and content, for those for whom it was intended. (W. Schneiders, ‘Zwischen Welt und Weisheit. Zur Verweltlichung der Philosophie in der frühen Moderne’, *Stud. Leibnitiana*, XV, 1983, p. 15). Although it took its name from Diderot’s appeal, “Let us hasten to render philosophy popular”, later appropriated by J.A. Ernesti in his *Prolusio de philosophia populari* (Leipzig, 1754),<sup>3</sup> the movement of “popular philosophy” reflected the historical conditions surrounding German philosophical culture and had no corresponding manifestation in other European nations. R. Mortier explains the phenomenon of popular philosophy by the link existing in Germany (but not in France) between intellectuals and political institutions; this accorded a pre-eminent position to pedagogical efforts rather than to polemical intentions (cf. Mortier, ‘Existe-t-il au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, en France, l’équivalent de la *Popularphilosophie* allemande?’, pp. 42–45).

Hence the “popular philosophy” was not a phenomenon which concerned the whole European Enlightenment, and even in Germany it did not last long and

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<sup>3</sup>Diderot’s expression – contained in thought XL of the treatise *De l’interprétation de la nature* – is reiterated in the following terms: “Si nous voulons que les philosophes marchent en avant, approchons le peuple du point où en sont les philosophes” (Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes*, IX, Paris, 1981, p. 69). Ernesti’s prolusio is quoted (Latin text accompanied by a French translation) by R. Mortier, ‘Diderot, Ernesti et la “philosophie populaire”’, in *Essays on Diderot and the Enlightenment in Honor of Otis Fellows* (Geneva, 1974), pp. 207–230.

was soon threatened by the dissemination of critical philosophy; the expression *Popularphilosophie* was interpreted in a negative sense, placing emphasis on the populist, light, and superficial aspect which denoted the absence of a true speculative spirit. And indeed, the aim of these thinkers was not primarily speculative: they assigned philosophy a pre-eminently practical and pedagogical function in the education of the cultivated, enlightened man. The aim of the popular philosophers was not a rejection of speculation, however, but a welding of theory and practice, and these philosophers did not oppose Wolff and his “rational thoughts” but tried to transfer these to the level of action, testing their validity by applying them to the diverse fields of experience.

If philosophy primarily expresses this functional attitude, then it is not correct to constrain it within an aprioristic definition. This is a theory of great significance for the historiography of philosophy. All definition is insufficient and abstract; each epoch, observes Meiners, reveals a different definition, which reflects the historical context of the philosopher. A historian will have to consider his object generally, taking into account the meaning assigned to philosophy in each different period. Even the internal division into the various philosophical disciplines is conventional and is to be related to the system of each thinker. The only distinction allowed is that between theoretical and practical philosophy, depending on whether concepts pertain to the intellect or to the will, the two fundamental powers (*die Grundkräfte*) of the soul, independent of each other, “while the concepts of theoretical philosophy are so uniform (*so gleichartig*) that there is no need to subdivide them into different parts”.<sup>4</sup> These guidelines – laid down by Michael Hissmann in a renowned work which is of great significance from our perspective since it clearly describes the situation of philosophical and historico-philosophical literature of his time – were still faithfully observed by Tiedemann when, at the beginning of his *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*, he renounces any attempt to define his object and accepts the distinction between theoretical (or speculative) and practical philosophy as the only objective classification.

Philosophy therefore resists any possibility of definition; and it certainly cannot be cultivated within the limits of a school or system. Although the popular

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<sup>4</sup>M. Hissmann, *Anleitung zur Kenntniss der auserlesenen Litteratur in allen Theilen der Philosophie* (Göttingen and Lemgo, 1778), p. 14. The importance of this work is confirmed by the publication, thirty years later, of J.H.M. Ernesti's *Encyclopädisches Handbuch einer allgemeinen Geschichte der Philosophie und ihrer Litteratur* (Lemgo, 1807), which bears the subtitle *Nebst Beyträgen zum weiteren Gebrauch der Hissmannischen Anleitung zur Kenntniss der auserlesenen Litteratur in allen Theilen der Philosophie*. In 1782 Michael Hissmann (1752–1784) was appointed professor at the University of Göttingen, but died two years later. His philosophical production is copious and significant; in addition to the aforementioned work, it includes: *Geschichte der Lehre von der Association der Ideen* (Göttingen, 1777), *Psychologische Versuche* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1777); *Untersuchungen über den Stand der Natur* (Göttingen, 1780), *Versuch über das Leben des Freyherrn von Leibniz* (Münster, 1783). Remarkable too was his activity as a translator – of Condillac, de Brosses, Demeunier; in particular, he edited the German edition of Condillac's *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, published in Leipzig in 1780. Cf. ADB, XII, p. 503; Merker, pp. 327–331.

philosophers drew heavily on Locke, Wolff, Leibniz, and Hume, for example, they did not wish to be considered as Lockean or Wolffian or Humean, and they were certainly not going to be Kantian, since they believed that theoretical philosophy must not be constrained within any dogmatic position but must always have an experimental basis. The programme of the popular philosophers was not the “heavy paraphernalia” of dogmatism, but a “useful eclecticism”, and in this respect, they continued and developed an approach adopted by the founder of the University of Göttingen, Baron Gerlach Adolph of Münchhausen, and its rector, Albrecht von Haller. Eclecticism means above all *Selbstdenken*, the capacity to think independently of prejudice and sectarianism, as Meiners made clear when inaugurating his teaching at Göttingen: “Today, what is commonly required of a philosopher is that he be eclectic, namely, as we say, he thinks for himself, and that from among many contrasting opinions he chooses the best ones and puts them forward for his students, basing them on all their foundations” (C. Meiners, *Revision der Philosophie*, Göttingen, 1772, p. 60). However, the use of the term ‘eclecticism’, which refers back to the tradition of German thought of the earlier Enlightenment (Ch. Thomasius, Buddeus, Brucker: see *Models*, II, pp. 301–385), was not as unanimous and consistent as it was during the first years of the eighteenth century. With reference to the greater influence exerted by English philosophy, especially that of Hume, in the final decades of the century, *Selbstdenken* was mainly associated with a ‘sound’ sceptical attitude, whose use – as Adelung, Meiners, and Tiedemann remark – was to keep research alive and prevent a dogmatic closure of the system, as long as it was not radical or absolute, that it concerned the constructions of the intellect, and did not question the data provided by experience.

The case of practical philosophy is different, where eclecticism or Scepticism can result in indecision and justify inaction. In this case too, there was an emphasis on the constitutive difference between theoretical and moral philosophy, which had been pointed out by the anti-Wolffian current (Crusius). Indeed, the foundation of morals does not lie in adapting behaviour to a rule which must be recognized by reason and to which the will must be subjected, but in the very nature of man, in his natural tendency to happiness, which is an infallible guide to action. The difference between this “ethics of feeling” and Kant’s “practical pure reason” is evident, but equally evident is the analogy in their starting point, seeking the foundation of morals in the subject, not the object. M. Hissmann had identified the essence of morals with the concept of autonomy: “The more the moralist philosopher insists on the obligation to observe his rules independent of theological bases, that is to say, not on the basis of the existence of God or the immortality of the soul, the more perfect his philosophical system is. Indeed, a profound moral philosopher must seek the foundations of the duty that he prescribes for men in the nature of the duty itself (*in der Natur der Pflicht selbst*). Every rule intended to induce right and virtuous behaviour must contain within it the foundation which makes it binding” (*Anleitung zur Kenntniss der auserlesenen Litteratur*, p. 408).

As we have seen, *Popularphilosophie* reflects an essential pedagogical need which determines the form, the method, and the style of the philosophical works, and consequently those on the history of philosophy. The favoured form was not

the treatise or the sterile school compendium, but the essay, with clear, simple, and convincing reasoning, not averse to elegance in style. The topics, even when they concern the most refined speculative questions, always contain some teaching or a message for the reader, often openly declared and emphasized. The philosopher, as Feder and Garve observe in the review of Kant's *Critique* cited above, will have to adapt himself to the common and natural manner of expression, which in turn will conform to the natural way in which the intellect thinks. According to Hissmann's judgement, the value of a philosophical work is determined by three factors: a) the importance of the content (in so far as it concerns man); b) the soundness of the method; c) elegance and clarity of the style (*Anleitung zur Kenntniss der auserlesenen Litteratur*, pp. 6–7). There are frequent polemical remarks against the geometrical method and, later, against Kant's *a priori* mode of proceeding. The extreme clarity produced by intellectual abstraction is merely an apparent clarity, which in fact leaves out the richness and complexity of reality. The model inspiring the *Popularphilosophen* is Newton's experimental method. Experience is the starting point, rooted in two sources: sensation and reflection. To privilege the former leads to materialism, the latter to idealism; we should therefore aim at attaining the right balance between these two extremes. Even though, in the controversy with the Kantians, it seems that greater emphasis is placed on the reasons for the objectivity of knowledge rather than on subjective foundations, nevertheless, the ideas of reflection or inner sense are still considered autonomously with respect to the ideas of sensation or outer sense, and are even judged to be superior to the latter because they constitute the basis of psychology, which is the philosophical science *par excellence*, since it has man as its object.

Psychology condenses in itself the whole of philosophy: "Psychology and the sciences deriving from it contain the theory of man and philosophy" (C. Meiners, *Kurzer Abriss der Psychologie*, Göttingen, 1773, § 8). Psychology is treated independently of any metaphysical question relating to the nature and immortality of the soul, as propounded by Johann Nikolaus Tetens, the writer in this field who was most influential and highly considered, not only by the *Popularphilosophen* but by Kant himself: "Not hypotheses but observations provide the concept of soul that follows, no matter what the soul is, whether a material being, or the brain, or again the brain infused with the soul, or lastly – using a term which is perhaps the best here because it is the most indeterminate of all – the entelechy of man. The soul is therefore a being that, through certain organs in the body is transformed by other things, and feels – hence spontaneously produces – something within itself and outside itself, and, of that which it undergoes and accomplishes, preserves traces within itself, which it draws out and elaborates" (J.N. Tetens, *Philosophische Versuche über die menschliche Natur und ihre Entwicklung*, Leipzig, 1777 [repr. Hildesheim and New York 1979], p. 730).

Psychology thus establishes itself as an empirical and descriptive science, totally different from Wolff's rational psychology; starting with observation of the self, its states and its acts, it aims to grasp the general principles, the laws which explain the constancy of phenomena. In the context of this interest, great emphasis is placed on the doctrine of the association of ideas, both on account of its



ability to provide the whole of psychic life with a foundation and because of its epistemological importance.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, epistemology too is included in psychology, in that part of the psychology which studies the laws of the functioning of the intellect. It is to psychology that the other theoretical or speculative disciplines must be referred and subjected, disciplines which are, in order of importance, aesthetics and metaphysics.<sup>6</sup> Considerable emphasis is placed on aesthetics, which at the time was the focus of great interest and lively debate among German thinkers, first of all the Wolffians Baumgarten and Meier, but also Lessing, Winckelmann, Herder, and finally Kant (figures who can be compared with Charles Batteux in France, a theoretician of aesthetics and a historian of philosophy, about whom see above, Sect. 2.3). Intellectual controversies seem to shift from theology to aesthetics, which is transformed from an archaeological science restricted to antiquarians to a science relevant to the present and able to give a direction to men's lives. This is due to the central position occupied by aesthetics within the philosophical system, as a junction between speculative philosophy and practical philosophy, a point of intersection and transition from psychology to ethics, as Hissmann clearly explains: "The theory of pleasant and unpleasant sensations is similar to the theory of moral sensations, hence the best handbooks of general practical philosophy will contain instructive digressions concerning the aesthetic doctrines of beauty and the pleasant. For virtue is moral beauty and the human heart which is rendered better by practical philosophy is morally beautiful" (*Anleitung zur Kenntniss der auserlesenen Litteratur*, p. 200).

In the philosophical framework elaborated by Hissmann, theoretical philosophy also included metaphysics, a traditional philosophical discipline that the popular philosophers regarded with mistrust and perplexity. To say that metaphysics aroused little interest is basically correct, but this is not enough to explain the tendency characterizing the philosophical culture of that period. As already noted by Kant in his *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, there is an underlying "nostalgia" for metaphysics and, on various sides, there starts to emerge a need for it to be set on new foundations (I. Kant, *Träume*, Ak. A., II, p. 367). According to the popular philosophers,

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Hissmann, *Geschichte der Lehre von der Association der Ideen*, 'Vorbericht', pp. [1–2]): considering the centrality of this psychological doctrine, "to which we should refer the most important psychic operations both in a state of wakefulness and of sleep", Hissmann acknowledges that, in reading the best philosophical writings, he carefully evaluated how and whether "the psychologist applied and used these laws in explaining the different phenomena of the human soul".

<sup>6</sup>Mathematics and physics are not considered to be true philosophical disciplines; cf. Hissmann, *Anleitung zur Kenntniss der auserlesenen Litteratur*, pp. 20–22: "According to all their content and their essence, the philosophical sciences are different from the mathematical sciences [...] Mathematical concepts are true in so far as they do not contain any contradiction in themselves, in so far as they are possible. The philosopher, by contrast, must realise his concepts so that a philosophical truth can be found in them. [...] Mathematics is the vital fluid which, when it circulates through the canals of physics, it imparts solidity and duration to this body. Physics and mathematics are therefore two scientific realities which cannot be separated from philosophy without causing considerable damage, but they cannot be separated from each other either".

metaphysics had gained too wide an ambit: it must therefore give back its treasures to the sciences that it has robbed: psychology, physics, and ethics.<sup>7</sup> Its noblest part, natural theology, must be dealt with separately from ontology and must be connected to practical philosophy; what is left seems to be precisely ontology or general metaphysics, that is to say, the discussion of more general concepts and principles and the study of the sources of knowledge, namely epistemology after Locke.

However, strictly speaking, this part of metaphysics is again included within the scope of psychology, since it derives its concepts from the study of the faculties of the soul. The following fundamental uncertainty thus arises: on one hand, it would seem that metaphysics must disappear as an autonomous discipline and be absorbed, according to its different objects, into the other parts of philosophy; on the other hand, the possibility arises of dealing with it autonomously, pursuing and developing the direction followed by the epistemological enquiry initiated by Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* and Leibniz's *New Essays*. The latter constitutes the perspective put forward, for example, by Tetens: "Transcendent philosophy, or fundamental science, must be dealt with primarily as a part of descriptive philosophy concerning the human intellect, its form of thought, its concepts, and the modes according to which concepts take shape, before it is possible to establish it as a universal rational science concerning the objects outside the intellect. Carrying the torch of observation in our hand, we have to follow the path along which Locke first guided us, searching for the sensations from which general notions have been taken" (J.N. Tetens, *Ueber die allgemeine speculativische Philosophie. Philosophische Versuche*, vol. I, ed. W. Uebele, Berlin, 1913, pp. 56–57). As it is known, Kant was to follow the direction taken by Tetens, although he amended it by adding the transcendental viewpoint; however, most popular philosophers were to adopt a more radical anti-metaphysical position, accusing critical philosophy of the same faults as traditional metaphysics, of being aprioristic, an abstract science devoid of any experimental basis.

The philosophical culture which we have outlined above was to provide the basis for the German historiography of philosophy of the later Enlightenment. Let us just recall the importance accorded by Meiners and Eberhard to the figure of Socrates, who becomes almost the prototype of the 'popular philosopher' because he was able to solve the fundamental philosophical problem by uniting thought and life,

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<sup>7</sup>Cf. Hissmann, *Anleitung zur Kenntniss der auserlesenen Litteratur*, pp. 18–19: "Metaphysics possesses treasures which she unjustly plundered and which therefore must be given back. For example, as concerns the elevated concepts of religion, the thesis on the origin of evil in the world, the doctrine of the destination of man, and other doctrines, are they not concepts, theses and doctrines which more properly belong to morals? The other general concepts of ontology, cosmology, and theology, the search for the paths leading to them and the most immediate consequences which can be deduced from them must for the most part be given back to psychology and to logic, because these [sciences] teach the source of general ideas and investigate the ways in which they originated".

theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, historians of philosophy are themselves *Popularphilosophen* and operate not only in the historical field but also in the fields of psychology, aesthetics, linguistics, pedagogy, and ethnography. Studies on the history of philosophy are closely connected with this kind of interest, and in this regard, it is significant that scholars – like Garve, Meiners, Adelung, and Tiedemann – make use of observations and examples drawn from evolutionary psychology or from travellers' accounts of encounters with savage peoples in order to explain the process by which culture begins among primitive peoples or to interpret the origin of philosophy in the ancient East or in pre-classical Greece.

The very nature of historico-philosophical work involves a connection with philosophical activity. This relationship had already been clearly perceived and enunciated during the first half of the eighteenth century by Buddeus, Heumann, and Brucker, who had required that the historian of philosophy possess the competence of the philosopher as his primary quality; and, as it is known, within Hegelian idealism the history of philosophy was eventually to merge into philosophy itself, according to the theory in which the logical process of the idea is the same as the development with which the idea fulfils itself. The link between philosophy and the history of philosophy is also asserted within the context of *Popularphilosophie* (cf. below, Introd., d), but the relationship is not as direct and binding. Rather, the link is established on a wider level, that is to say, between 'philosophy' (understood as a science which has man as its object) and the 'history of man', which describes man's evolution and progressive cultural and moral ascent.

In any case, if, as we have seen, the philosophical method starts from observation and moves from experience to the laws accounting for it, then recourse to history becomes a phase required by philosophical research itself. History, therefore, is granted the status of a philosophical science, especially after Voltaire's formulation of the expression *Philosophie de l'histoire* to denote the history of man and civilization seen in its unitary development; indeed, Hissmann views this unity as a chapter of philosophical literature, beside psychology, metaphysics, aesthetics,

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<sup>8</sup>A description of Socrates as the model of the true philosopher, in the sense meant by the *Popularphilosophie*, is contained in a brief outline of the history of philosophy entitled *Gedanken über die Herrnhuter (Thoughts on the Moravian Brethren)*, written by Lessing in 1750; cf. G. E. Lessing, *Gesammelte Werke in zehn Bänden*, ed. P. Rilla (Berlin and Weimar, 1968), pp. 185–196. The essay was intended to rehabilitate a religious sect unjustly accused and persecuted by orthodox Lutherans, but the analysis does not go beyond the historical section; what is left is a fragment of the history of philosophy which is discussed in parallel with the history of the Church. Socrates stands out as a central figure in ancient philosophy, on account of the fact that he brought philosophy back "from heaven to earth", whereas Plato and Aristotle betrayed the teaching of their master, since they started "to build dreams" (the former) and "formulate sophisms" (the latter). Newton, Leibniz, Luther, and Calvin were the reformers of philosophy and theology in the modern age but remained too closely linked to the speculative and dialectic perspective, while neglecting the practical fulfilment of doctrine. In order to attain this end, Lessing invokes the appearance of a new Socrates; and yet, he would receive the same treatment as that reserved to him by the Athenians of his time. Cf. Banfi, pp. 116–117; M. Longo, 'La storia della filosofia nel giovane Lessing', in *Vetera novis augere. Studi in onore di Carlo Giacon* (Rome, 1981), pp. 297–308.

and practical philosophy: “All useful philosophy is a reasoning history (*eine räsønnirende Geschichte*). All its concepts, both general and particular, must be deduced from real things, which we learn to know through observation and experience. The formation of arbitrary concepts, their composition, connection, and derivatives are outcomes of the activity of reflection, but cannot be confused with general philosophical concepts and principles. Useful philosophy is not concerned with worlds or essences that the human mind creates as it pleases, which therefore only exist in the mind. Real history is the foundation (*die Grundfeste*) of real philosophy”.<sup>9</sup>

History, which is the foundation of “real philosophy”, is all the more the foundation of the history of philosophy. The latter has its natural place not among the philosophical disciplines but within historical research, as a particular moment during which the more general history of man is fulfilled.<sup>10</sup> The link is no longer between philosophy, understood as the construction of a complete system accounting for reality, and the history of philosophy, hence conceived of either as the memory of the systems of the past with the aim of recovering partial truths and integrating them into the new system which is to be asserted, or as an enquiry intended to show the distance that has been covered in order to reach that system. The ‘history of philosophy’ is now preferably related to the ‘history of man’, with the same status as the other historical disciplines; and it is only indirectly, as a part of the history of man, that it also constitutes the foundation of the science of man: philosophy.

The history of philosophical systems, as written by Brucker, is now considered to be of little interest on a speculative level; indeed, systems do not contain any truth which cannot also be discovered through personal observation and reflection. On the contrary, as Adelung observes, since systems are dogmatically closed in on themselves, they are nothing but a mixture of errors perpetuated and handed down thanks to the links between the schools of thought. Nevertheless, systems still

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<sup>9</sup>Hissmann, *Anleitung zur Kenntniss der auserlesenen Litteratur*, pp. 91–92. Philosophical literature is here subdivided into thirteen sections, the first three of which rest clearly on a historical basis: I. ‘Litteraturgeschichte der Philosophie’; II. ‘Geschichte der Philosophie’; III. ‘Philosophie der Geschichte’; IV. ‘Philosophie überhaupt’; V. ‘Litteratur der Psychologie oder der Logik’; VI. ‘Litteratur der Aesthetik’; VII. ‘Litteratur der Metaphysik’; VIII. ‘Litteratur der natürlichen Theologie’; IX. ‘Litteratur der allgemeinen praktischen Philosophie’; X. ‘Litteratur des Rechts der Natur’; XI. ‘Litteratur der Politik’; XII. ‘Litteratur der philosophischen Sittenlehre’; XIII. ‘Litteratur der Pädagogik’.

<sup>10</sup>In Hissmann’s work quoted above, the issue of the history of philosophy is examined in depth not so much in the section entitled ‘Geschichte der Philosophie’, where the historiography of philosophy (Stanley, Deslandes, Brucker...) is presented with no particular emphasis, as in the section devoted to the ‘Philosophie der Geschichte’, notably in the following paragraphs: ‘Geschichte der Menschheit’ (§ 46), ‘Geschichte des menschlichen Verstandes’ (§ 54), ‘Ueber die Geschichte der Künste und Wissenschaften’ (§ 55). The latter history is defined as “the most instructive history of the human mind” and, since it describes the history of man’s gradual progress as not due to chance but to a conscious effort of the intellectual faculty, it can also be termed “history of the human reason” (pp. 118–119).

remain at the centre of historical interest: in the first place, they provide a criterion for interpreting doctrines truthfully, since doctrines disclose their specific meaning only through a systematic connection. As regards this methodological precaution, Adelung and Tiedemann agree with Brucker but also with Buhle and Tennemann. Furthermore, the succession of systems attests to the progress of philosophy from confused opinions towards gradually more complete and appropriate theories. It is not the criterion of 'truth', but that of 'progress' which constitutes the standard for elaborating historiographical judgements, a criterion of a historical rather than a philosophical nature.

(c) *The historical culture*

During the first half of the eighteenth century, German authors had aimed at providing the history of philosophy as a discipline with a theoretical basis, envisaging a "philosophical" or "critical" history which was not merely 'history', an account of facts, but 'philosophy', the search for the foundations of doctrines and the ascertainment of their truth (see C.A. Heumann's project to turn the history of philosophy into a *historia philosophiae philosophica: Models*, II, pp. 410–415). If we adopt Heumann's and Brucker's perspective – but note that Buhle and Tennemann were to express similar judgements – we can see that the historiography dating from the later Enlightenment seems to represent a step backward, a return to seventeenth-century models of the *historiae philosophicae* viewed as parts of the *historiae litterariae*.

Indeed, for Meiners and Tiedemann, the history of philosophy is valuable as a part of historical science rather than as a tool of philosophy. This does not lessen its importance, for the history of philosophy casts light on the most important aspect of the history of man, where man is viewed in his capability for inventing and discovering, that is, as the protagonist of the progress of culture. Hence, it is unimportant to ask whether the ideas of Plato or Aristotle are true or false: studies relating to present-day interests will have to establish whether these ideas are more or less complete. Rather, they are examined as expressions of a certain civilization – here, classical Greek civilization – whose spirit and mentality (*die Denkart*) they reveal, and, moreover, they enable us to grasp the degree of cultural development attained by humanity at that particular moment in its history, in those particular conditions of space and time. Ideas are all the more important as they are original and have contributed to bringing about changes in the structure of progress; prime importance is obviously granted to those discoveries and inventions which, adequately perfected, have become the common patrimony of humanity. The focus of interest is precisely this progress, in which the history of man is condensed, from the "lowest degrees of its development up to the highest degrees that he is allowed to reach", according to the words formulated by Hissmann (*Anleitung zur Kenntniss der auserlesenen Litteratur*, p. 102) and reiterated by subsequent historians.

The history of philosophy is not oriented in a single direction or field of research, however important it may be, as in the case of the history of philosophical reflection, but is extended to embrace the wider dimension of the 'history of culture'. Christoph Meiners is a typical exponent of this 'open' form of historiography, whose problems

he perceives and discusses in the 'Vorrede' to his *Geschichte der Wissenschaften*: the broader, more complete, and composite the picture of civil and cultural life, the better and deeper is our understanding of philosophical systems; these in turn provide useful elements for interpreting the broader historical and cultural scene, especially when they are original and full of discoveries, because in this way they show the line of progress traced in the history of humanity more clearly. The whole of Meiners' work is oriented towards the history of philosophical – as well as scientific and religious – ideas, which are viewed as elements contributing to an understanding of the history of civilization. A similar orientation is followed by the historiography produced by Adelung, Eberhard, and Tiedemann.

The notion of 'progress', together with those of culture-civilization (*Kultur*) and Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*), was an object of reflection for almost all historians of philosophy. Tiedemann in particular aimed to establish the rhythms according to which it develops in the field of the history of philosophy. Slowness or rapidity of progress depend upon the different historical and cultural conditions: in certain ages, there is progress thanks to a concentrated and in-depth analysis of the field of enquiry; in other ages, progress is directed towards expansion and enlargement. Human reason does not cease to operate: what changes are only the rhythms and modes of its action. This premise engenders a new historiographical picture compared to the traditional one: in particular, scholars rediscovered the philosophical value of certain periods, such as late Antiquity and the medieval age, whose value had been underestimated by previous historians. It is precisely in these periods that the history of philosophy appears to be privileged in comparison with the other histories of man, because it presents an uninterrupted progression, a deepening and widening of the human capacity for knowledge which proceeds without ceasing, even though its development unfolds according to different levels of intensity and rhythm. The history of peoples, empires, and civilizations presents moments of rupture and decline, regression and dark periods, which can question the confidence in man's ability to advance towards the perfecting of his nature. By contrast, the history of philosophy, as Tiedemann observes, proves that human reason has never stopped advancing and that – even in the most difficult moments in the history of humanity, such as the Middle Ages – it has been able to find in itself, and develop, seeds which have ripened to produce, in the following age, the conditions needed for a new leap forward in the field of knowledge. Furthermore, trust in the progress of reason, which is confirmed and justified by the history of philosophy, renders the action of intellectuals in their defence and dissemination of the *Aufklärung* more secure. Indeed, the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* ends with a passionate celebration of the progress of reason towards goals which are increasingly more elevated and appropriate to man's nature.

The enlargement of the historiographical perspective led to a different evaluation of the sources. Brucker and earlier historiography had privileged, as sources of ancient thought, Diogenes Laertius, the Fathers of the Church, the Neoplatonists or, at most, authors like the Pseudo-Plutarch who wrote *De placitis philosophorum*, Stobaeus, or Suida, who lived from the second century after Christ onwards. All these testimonies are now laid aside in order to find chronologically remoter sources:

there is a notable rediscovery of Plato and Aristotle's works, seen as valuable testimonies. For this reason, after nearly two centuries, in the 1780s and 1790s the *Opera omnia* of these two philosophers was re-published by the *Societas Bipontina*, edited by the Göttingen philological school, with the direct contribution of some historians of philosophy (Tiedemann and Buhle).<sup>11</sup> The interest in these two great thinkers of Antiquity was above all of a philological character: it was not so much their system which aroused new interest, but rather the possibility of deriving a more exact picture of earlier philosophical speculation from their writings.

Greatest emphasis is placed on the testimony of Aristotle, who becomes the preferred guide for interpreting pre-Socratic thought, because – as Tiedemann declares – he was the greatest philosopher of Antiquity and was therefore perfectly able to understand these early doctrines which he could not have misinterpreted since, as well as being orally transmitted, the writings of these authors were at the time still widespread. But the testimony of Aristotle is not enough: the general tendency is to view the historical and cultural framework within which the ideas elaborated by philosophers are placed, and hence Aristotle is as valuable as the testimony of the major historians of Antiquity – Thucydides, Herodotus, Xenophon, and Polybius. The value of a history of philosophy depends both on the breadth of the sources cited and, primarily, on the way in which they are examined and employed. The Göttingen historians of philosophy devoted special attention to this aspect of historiographical activity: a preliminary criticism of the sources was a guarantee of the seriousness and reliability of the historical work. An example of the application of this philological criticism to the historiography of philosophy is offered by Meiners in the long introduction to the chapter on Pythagoreanism in his *Geschichte der Wissenschaften*, which was to represent a model for later historians.

Meiners and Tiedemann, and later Buhle too, were pupils of Christian Gottlieb Heyne (1729–1812), a prominent figure in the Georg August-Universität and director of the *Göttingische Anzeigen*, the official journal of the *Königliche Societät der Wissenschaften*.<sup>12</sup> It is worth mentioning his activity as director of the 'Philological Seminar', the distinguished institution which educated a multitude of German

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Platonis *Opera, quae exstant, omnia, ad edit. Henr. Stephani* [Paris, 1578], studio Societatis Bipontinae (1786), 11 vols; Aristotelis *Opera omnia, Graece, ad optimum exemplarium fidem recensuit, annotationem criticam, librorum argumenta et novam versionem Latinam adjecit J.T. Buhle* (Zweibrücken [then Strasbourg], 1791 f.). Worth mentioning is also a history of philosophy drawn from Cicero's works and integrated with excerpts from other Greek and Latin thinkers: M.T. Ciceronis *Historia philosophiae antiquae ex omnibus illius scriptis collegit, disposuit, aliorumque auctorum cum Latinorum, tum Graecorum locis et illustravit et amplificavit* F. Gedike (Berlin, 1782). Two *Opera omnia* of Cicero appear at the end of the eighteenth century, edited by J.A. Ernesti (Halle, 1774–77) and C.D. Beck (Leipzig, 1795–1804); Plutarch's *Opera omnia* is edited by J.J. Reiske (Leipzig, 1774–1782), Sextus Empiricus' *Opera* by J.G. Mund (Halle, 1796), Stobaeus' *Eclogae*, by H.L. Heeren (Göttingen, 1792). A list of the editions of the classics of philosophy in the eighteenth century is contained in Ernesti, pp. 47–73.

<sup>12</sup>Directors before Heyne had been Albrecht von Haller and Johann David Michaelis, after him Johann Gottfried Eichhorn and Arnold Heeren.

philologists and classical scholars at the end of the century.<sup>13</sup> The Philological Seminar, whose foundation dates from 1737, originally performed a limited function related to the ecclesiastical profession and to the education of teachers. With Heyne it became a “breeding ground for humanists”, experts on classical culture, who were taught to read texts and comment on them, as one of the earlier and most authoritative historians of the University of Göttingen observed: “This method has enabled him to discover, from time to time, a certain number of talented young brains, stirring their enthusiasm for ancient literature and leading them on the right path of classical erudition and well-grounded humanistic studies”.<sup>14</sup> Heyne’s teaching influenced the historiography of philosophy of this period, fostering a more careful consideration of the critical and philological questions and leading to the privileged position of a direct reading of the testimonies and the works produced by philosophers rather than an analysis of general interpretative problems, which are summarized and commented on rather than extrapolated or merely cited.

The historiography of philosophy was also influenced by Heyne’s literary and scientific activity, which aimed to change mythology into a science.<sup>15</sup> Against the conception, common at the time, of myth as the result of error, prejudice, and fallacy, Heyne defined mythology as “the most ancient history or philosophy; the totality of ancient popular sagas, expressed in a rough and ancient language” (Heyne, ‘Vorrede’ to M.G. Herrmann, *Handbuch der Mythologie*, Berlin, 1787, pp. 2–3). Myth must therefore be understood in accordance with the spirit of its age: “That which germinated and was discovered in the roughest age and by the most primitive people admits no other interpretation than that formulated according to the discernment and customs of primitive men; a subtler and cleverer interpretation of this type of myth is much less faithful” (‘Sermonis mythici seu symbolici

<sup>13</sup>Cf. U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *History of Classical Scholarship*, transl. A. Harris (Baltimore, 1982), p. 102: “The man who scattered the seed that bore such various fruit in the persons of Zoëga, Voss and Wolf, the brothers Humboldt and Schlegel, deserves to be called a *Praeceptor Germaniae* in a higher sense than Gesner”.

<sup>14</sup>See J.S. Pütter, *Versuch einer academischen Gelehrten-Geschichte von der Georg-Augustus Universität zu Göttingen* (Göttingen, 1788), II, p. 275. Regarding the Philological Seminar, see pp. 273–279; a list of the attending students who later distinguished themselves on the cultural scene is on pp. 277–279. Pütter thus describes the method used by Heyne, who was directly in charge of philological education, while the propaedeutic disciplines (philosophy, mathematics, and history) were entrusted to other teachers: “The seminar lesson consists in exercise and sometimes in the interpretation of difficult passages and of Greek or Roman poets. The seminarian replaces the master, the professor limits himself to leading or guiding the conference; possibly he intervenes to correct the seminarian or to draw the attention to the defects present in the expression” (pp. 273–274).

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Verra, *Mito, rivelazione e filosofia in J.G. Herder e nel suo tempo*, pp. 21–33; see also the appendix, which contains some important dissertations by Heyne on this subject: *Temporum mythicorum memoria a corruptelis nonnullis vindicata* (pp. 161–171); *De caussis fabularum seu mythorum veterum physiciis* (pp. 173–183); *De opinionibus per mythos traditis* (pp. 185–188); *De mythorum poeticorum natura, origine et caussis* (pp. 189–193); *Sermonis mythici seu symbolici interpretatio* (pp. 195–220).



interpretatio', in Verra, *Mito, rivelazione, filosofia*, pp. 208–209). The tool to be used for a proper understanding of mythology is a comparison between the ideas and language of the primitive peoples of our era with the Greeks of the age of Homer and Hesiod, a technique of interpretation fashionable at the time and abundantly used by the historians of philosophy themselves: "Now, since several ages have elapsed, the question has come to the point that both the nature of religions and the nature of reasoning have changed, and meanwhile mythological reasoning has developed in its own way; it follows that even the interpretation of myths and mythical reasoning must be referred to the different degrees of life – more or less primitive, more or less advanced – as well as to a greater or lesser education of the mind and reasoning, and it must be performed and led by taking into account the succession and progress of time" (p. 204).

The acknowledgement of the significance of myth for interpreting the primitive world is reflected in the new direction followed by historical studies. Herder polemically reversed the orientation of historical research which, in the context of the Enlightenment, proceeded from the present, from the age of the *Lumières*, and went backwards to trace the conditions and presuppositions of this present. His motto was, "let us go back to the origins", to that primitive poetic world that the man of his time, too cultivated and too philosophical, was no longer able to understand, but which, nevertheless, continues to represent the necessary starting point of the history of mankind: "The origin contains the entire nature of the product, just as the seed conceals the entire tree, complete with all its parts" (J.G. Herder, *Versuch einer Geschichte der lyrischen Dichtkunst*, in Id., *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. B. Suphan, Berlin, 1877–1913 [repr. Hildesheim, 1967–1968], XXXII, pp. 86–87). For Herder, myth is no longer related to a deficiency in language, but to the very nature of language at the key moment of its formation; hence, the study of the poetic and mythological world provides a knowledge of the formation of human civilization, because language is that on which the arts, the sciences, and the development of the very idea of mankind depend.<sup>16</sup>

This is the basis of Herder's opposition to the philosophy of history elaborated by authors like Montesquieu, Voltaire, Robertson, and Iselin, which he formulates in his *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, published in 1774. Compared with Heyne, who deals with the primitive world as a scientist, what prevails in Herder is a sympathetic attitude, a participation in the experience of the life of primitive man, in constant polemic with the culture of his time which, claiming to be a standard for judging all other historical ages, perceives in the past nothing but falseness, ignorance, or unhappiness.<sup>17</sup> On the contrary, each historical period

<sup>16</sup>See J.G. Herder, *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (Berlin, 1772). Language does not have a divine but a human nature, in the sense that man is both creature and creator of language. This theory is also central to Herder's philosophy of history; cf. J.G. Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, in Id., *Sämtliche Werke*, XIII, pp. 141–142.

<sup>17</sup>See J.G. Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit. Beytrag zu vielen Beytragen des Jahrhunderts*, in Id., *Sämtliche Werke*, V, p. 484: "It was there [in the East] that the human mind developed the first forms of wisdom and virtue with a simplicity, strength,

must be understood as a living individuality and judged according to its intrinsic values and intents: "if not, we will always be confronted, especially from the European viewpoint, with just as many masks" (*Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte*, p. 490). In this regard, he uses an analogy between history and human life: the latter constitutes a unitary process which, however, accomplishes itself through a systematic connection linking the separate ages of man, in each of which the principle of life is operating. Herder therefore does not come to reject progress but formulates a new interpretation of it, according to which progress is viewed as an organic development of living powers rather than as a mechanical and rectilinear movement.

The polemical intent prevailing in Herder's *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* is softened in his *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, a systematic work in which his conception of history becomes manifest in its completeness and organic entirety. The image of the life of each individual man, used to designate that of mankind, is now left aside; the history of mankind acquires a cosmic dimension in an attempt to consider man as the central element in the chain of being, that specific link in the chain which, according to Leibniz's view, links the world of nature and the world of spirits. The principle involving an understanding of each historical epoch in its originality and individuality is reiterated, but a broader outlook provides each separate part with a different structure. The central position is occupied by the Greek world, also with reference to that ideal of humanity which constitutes the underlying thread of history and which Herder perceives as clearly outlined in Hellenic civilization. The structure of periodization adopted by Herder is certainly more complex than that contained in the histories of philosophy: indeed, the first two parts of his work present partitions of an astronomical, geographical, and biological nature; the history of man, properly speaking, is outlined in the last two sections, published respectively in 1787 and 1791. The first two books (books XI and XII of the entire work) deal with the peoples of the East, proceeding from the Far East (China) westwards (Egypt). Two books are devoted respectively to the Greeks (XIII) and the Latins (XIV), followed by an analysis of the fundamental concept of Herder's philosophy of history, namely the ideal of "Humanity" (XV). Before coming to Christianity (XVII), he reviews the nations of Europe (XVI), but comes back to the same geographical realm when treating the age of Germano-Roman kingdoms (XVIII). The historical survey closes with a book on the Middle Ages (XIX) and a final book on the harbingers of the modern age (XX), with two final paragraphs bearing the eloquent titles: 'Civilization of Reason in Europe' and 'Institutions and Discoveries in Europe'.<sup>18</sup>

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and loftiness that now – we have to speak clearly – in our philosophical and cold European world has nothing, absolutely nothing, like it. And precisely because, by now, we are so incapable of understanding, of feeling it, let alone of enjoying it, we mock, deny, and distort it: this is indeed the best proof!"

<sup>18</sup>See the final paragraphs of *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*: 'Cultur der Vernunft in Europa' (*Sämtliche Werke*, XIV, pp. 476–486) and 'Anstalten und Entdeckungen in Europa' (pp. 486–491), followed by a brief 'Schlußanmerkung' (pp. 492–493), which contains a

The historical picture drawn by Herder, interspersed with observations concerning the concepts of man and progress, tends to be characterized by continuity rather than rupture with respect to the ideals shared by the philosophical culture of the period,<sup>19</sup> and even to the results reached by authors like Heyne, Winckelmann, Gatterer, or Meiners, who are repeatedly mentioned (especially Heyne). This clearly appears from the chapters dealing with the history of the sciences, the arts, and philosophy. Egyptian learning, which *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte*<sup>20</sup> had polemically celebrated for anti-Enlightenment purposes, is now dismissed with a

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definition of Europe as follows: “Welcher Art die neue Cultur Europa’s seyn konnte, ist aus dem Vorhergehenden auch sichtbar. Nur eine Cultur der Menschen, wie sie waren und seyn wollten; eine Cultur durch Betriebsamkeit, Wissenschaften und Künste”.

<sup>19</sup>Let us just mention here the relationship between Herder’s philosophy of history and the Enlightenment. Some historians (als Meinecke) view Herder in opposition with his time and the early developments of the conception of history elaborated within Romanticism. By contrast, other historians (als Cassirer) view his thought in continuity and as a form of development with respect to Enlightenment positions. Worth mentioning is the well-balanced interpretation offered by Ayrault, *La genèse du Romantisme allemand*, II, pp. 452–465: Herder was an Enlightenment thinker “against his own will”; Hamann’s influence, filtered through his reading of Rousseau, brought him to change the concept of “revelation” into that of “education”, thus providing Lessing with the circumstance and subject matter for his most famous work, *Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts* (1780); “[...] et Lessing a pu faire tourner au triomphe des ‘vérités de raison’ ce qui n’avait été pour Herder qu’une manière d’humilier la raison devant la somme d’irrationnel où elle plonge” (p. 461).

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte*, p. 488. Concerning the question of the origin of philosophy, in this period historians generally accept Brucker’s theory, which recognized the merit of the Greeks as the first to have founded philosophy as a science (see *Models*, II, pp. 519–522). There are exceptions though, for example Adelung, who makes Greek philosophy depend on Eastern thought. Even more determined in this re-evaluation of Eastern speculation, notably of the Egyptians, are the works of Fr. Victor Lebrecht Plessing (1749–1806): *Osiris und Socrates* (Berlin and Stralsund, 1783); *Historische und philosophische Untersuchungen über die Denkart, Theologie und Philosophie der ältesten Völker, vorzüglich der Griechen, bis auf Aristoteles Zeiten* (Elbingen, 1785); *Memnonium, oder Versuche zur Enthüllung der Geheimnisse des Alterthums* (Leipzig, 1787), 2 vols (the first volume is dedicated to Egyptian wisdom, the second to Plato’s philosophy and to its alleged Egyptian source); *Versuche zur Aufklärung der Philosophie des ältesten Alterthums* (Leipzig, 1788–1790, 2 vols). Plessing tries to demonstrate that the metaphysical system of the Greeks (from the Pythagoreans and Eleatics to Plato and Aristotle) perfects and embellishes the theological and metaphysical system of the Egyptians: “Actually, this philosophy is the outcome of the most elevated and profound speculation, a speculation which is however completely bent on itself; it contains the finest texture of an imagination which is left to itself” (*Versuche zur Aufklärung*, I, p. 12). The first volume of the *Versuche zur Aufklärung der Philosophie* is entirely devoted to Plato, whose thought – the doctrine of ideas, matter, and the soul of the world – manifests the character of this system more clearly. Then he comes to the Eleatics, the Pythagoreans, Aristotle, and a comparison between the ancient philosophical doctrines and the Hebrew-Christian theological system. Particularly significant are the last two books: ‘Ueber Aegyptens Wissenschaften und den aegyptischen Ursprung der vom Plato und in den Mysterien gelehnten metaphysischen Philosophie’ (II, pp. 877–980); ‘Ueber die Männerliebe der Griechen; und über Aegyptens Osiris, Isis, Horus, und Typhon’ (II, pp. 981–1036).

judgement that appears to be as severe as that formulated by Brucker and Meiners.<sup>21</sup> The Greeks are definitively defined as the creators of philosophy as well as beautiful art.<sup>22</sup> To the mind of the philosopher of history, Hellenic civilization is presented as an example for understanding the engine of historical development, because – as the only case in history – it has accomplished the complete cycle of its biological evolution: “The Greeks not only did not mingle with foreign nations and remained faithful to themselves throughout the development of their culture, but also lived their age so completely and followed its entire course from the extremely modest beginnings of their civilization in a way which never appeared in any other people in history. [...] Therefore, just as the naturalist may only gain a complete knowledge of a plant when he observes it from seed and germ until it blooms and withers, so Greek history appears to us to be similar to that plant” (*Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte*, pp. 143–144; the same theory appears in Meiners: see below, Sect. 9.2.3).

The theories on the history of philosophy contained in the *Ideen* do not differ from the interpretations currently adopted in the historiography of philosophy. Let us note, for example, the judgement on Aristotle, who is described as “perhaps the sharpest, steadiest, and coldest mind who ever put pen to paper”. Aristotle’s philosophy was a school philosophy, speculative and scientific, not intended for “ordinary life”, but precisely for this reason “much more did pure reason and science take advantage of it, and so [Aristotle] is constantly present in their field as a monarch of the ages” (p. 128). The observations concerning the value of medieval thought may be understood as an anticipation of the re-evaluation of Scholasticism carried out by Tiedemann. Besides his predictably positive appraisal of the heretical movements for their demolition of ecclesiastical authority, Herder stressed the contribution provided, to this end, by the speculation of the Scholastics: “At the time there were no articles of theology, no arguments of metaphysics which did not give rise to questions, disputes, and the subtlest distinctions, and which through time were developed into a more refined web of concepts. This web was by its nature less substantial than that approximate framework of theological traditions which were to be blindly trusted: since it had been woven by human reason, as its own work, it could similarly be undone and destroyed by reason itself. Let us therefore thank this refined dialectic spirit of the Middle Ages and each ruler who created the castles in which such copious erudite webs were woven! Although many of those participating in the disputes were persecuted out of envy or owing to their imprudence, and after their death were even disinterred and expelled from the

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte*, in Id., *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. XIV, p. 79: “In vain we would seek treasures of hidden wisdom in hieroglyphs, because hieroglyphs are the roughest and most infantile forms the human intellect uses to explain and denote its thoughts, and hieroglyphs can also be found among the most savage peoples of America. Hence, the fact that the Egyptian people availed itself of hieroglyphs for such a long time indicates poverty of ideas and a limited advancement of the intellect”.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 129: “It was in Greece that the foundations were laid for seeking all that which is certain within the sciences, and similarly for the beauty of form, and it is a misfortune that fate handed down to us so few texts written by the profound sages of Greece”.

cemetery in which they had been buried, nevertheless that art as a whole progressed and greatly sharpened the reason and language of the Europeans” (pp. 480–481).

Within the perspective outlined by Heyne and developed by Herder, interest in ancient (but also medieval) philosophy interwove with the study of the poetic world and the history of language and civilization. This also contributed to a strengthening of the tendency of the historiography of philosophy in the later Enlightenment to manifest itself in a ‘history of man’ viewed in the entirety of his expressions, that is to say in a ‘history of culture’. It thus became quite natural to find frequent and fruitful openings to the history of philosophy in works on political and cultural history, which multiplied at the end of the century and converged on what has been termed ‘the Göttingen historical school’. In addition to its contents, what characterized historiography was a certain methodical uniformity; this is confirmed by the fact that historians of philosophy appealed to the ‘pragmatic method’ developed in the field of political history by Johann Christoph Gatterer in the first issue of the *Allgemeine historische Bibliothek*, the official organ of the *Königl. Institut der historischen Wissenschaften*.<sup>23</sup>

There is only one history: the ‘history of nations’. This statement opens Gatterer’s essay, which has been defined as “the programmatic document marking the beginning of Göttingen historiography” (Marino, p. 287) and which bears the title ‘Vom historischen Plan und der darauf sich gründenden Zusammenfügung der Erzählungen’ (AHB, I (1767), pp. 15–90). The plan of a universal history of nations is the model for more specific histories, among them the history of philosophy. Indeed, it is precisely universal history which manifests more clearly the need for a pragmatic method. It is one thing to compile chronicles or annals, which depict events and characters according to an extrinsic order, but it is another to write a true history, that is, a “pragmatic” history, which aims at grasping the correlation of facts, the system of relationships represented by causes and effects which explains the sequence of events: “Therefore the plan for giving an account of events should not be arranged according to a geographical order, nor according to divisions into years, nor again by distinguishing particular classes of events, but according to systems: causes precede, effects follow. A historian who proceeds according to this principle is a *pragmatic historian*. [...] Hence, the chief concern of a historian wishing to rise to the highest class of historians, the class of pragmatic historians, must be to seek the occasional reasons and the causes of a remarkable event and to represent, as completely as possible, the entire system of causes and effects, means

<sup>23</sup>This review appeared in 16 fascicles between 1767 and 1771; it was then replaced by the *Historisches Journal* (1772–1781), directed by Gatterer himself (cf. Kirchner, I, p. 129). Gatterer has been numbered among the founders of Göttingen historiography not only thanks to his activity fostering historical research through the *Königl. Institut der historischen Wissenschaften* and for having initiated the so-called auxiliary sciences of historiography, such as diplomatics, genealogy, heraldry, and numismatics, but especially for having succeeded in reconciling erudition with the critical spirit of the Enlightenment, the tradition of the Maurists with the aspirations of the *philosophes*.

and aims, even though at the beginning this appears to flow confusedly and without any order" (Gatterer, 'Vom historischen Plan', AHB, I, 1767, p. 80).

The term 'pragmatic' applied to historiographical methodology must not be generally understood as a synonym of 'useful', but designates the need for a scientific outlook on history, namely, for an understanding of history viewed in its line of development and organic progression. Meiners and Tiedemann were to try to apply this method to the history of philosophy by enunciating the causes – divided into classes according to their importance – which may have given rise to ideas and philosophical systems. The problem addressed by historians of philosophy was to avoid taking forced positions and assuming factors and conditions *a priori* which are themselves always historically determined. This cautious attitude was present in Gatterer as well, who recommended that the connection supporting the description of facts must not be "forced": "A description paves the way for another description, and the reader, advancing easily and helped by the very disposition of the accounts, can be led from one object to another" (*Vom historischen Plan*, p. 23).

The plan to create a pragmatic history with an interdisciplinary nature, as roughly outlined in Gatterer's article, saw its partial fulfilment in one of the most ambitious editorial undertakings of the end of the century, namely, the vast, composite *Geschichte der Künste und Wissenschaften seit der Wiederherstellung derselben bis an das Ende des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, which was published in Göttingen (1796), edited by Johann Gottfried Eichhorn, a theologian and Orientalist close to Heyne and Herder's positions.<sup>24</sup> Eichhorn turned to the leading specialists of the *Georgia Augusta* for the histories of the distinct disciplines: Buhle was in charge of the section containing the history of philosophy (see below, Sect. 11.1.2), Heeren the history of philology, Bouterwerk the history of poetry and rhetoric, Stäudlin the history of Christian morals, and Kästner the history of mathematics (see D'Alessandro, *L'illuminismo dimenticato*, pp. 267–310).

The extended 'Vorrede' to the first volume, written by Eichhorn under the title 'Allgemeine Geschichte der Cultur und Litteratur des neueren Europa' (pp. V–LXXXVIII), demonstrates the tendencies and methods currently adopted in the context of the historical culture of the later Enlightenment. The first precondition was the link between the history of the sciences and social and political history: "The history of the arts and sciences, of their beginning and progression as well as their modifications can never be separated from the history of social conditions. For civilization and literature (*Cultur und Litteratur*) are twin sisters with a common father, and they incessantly help and support each other. Imperceptibly, they start their frail life together: civilization, as a firstborn child, prepares the

<sup>24</sup>The work is presented as consisting of eleven sections: "I. Allgemeine Geschichte der Cultur und Litteratur, als Einleitung in die übrigen Abtheilungen; II. Geschichte der schönen Künste; III. Der schönen Wissenschaften (der Dichtkunst und Beredsamkeit); IV. Der Philologie; V. Der Geschichte; VI. Der Philosophie; VII. Der Mathematik; VIII. Der Physik (der Naturgeschichte, Naturlehre, der Oekonomie, Technologie, Kameral-Policey- und Finanz Wissenschaften); IX. Der Medizin; X. Der Jurisprudenz und XI. Der Theologie" (*Geschichte der Künste und Wissenschaften*, I, 'Vorrede', p. LXXXVII).

birth of literature, its younger sister; from that moment onwards they live and operate inseparably joined together, and the death of one is the death of the other. Without the history of one, the curriculum of the other would be incomplete and incomprehensible" (Eichhorn, *Allgemeine Geschichte*, 'Vorrede', pp. VI–VII). The unity of history depends on the unity of its object, which is man understood as a moral and social being: "The object of history is, on the one hand, society, which educates man and develops his spiritual faculties under the influence constantly exerted by surrounding nature; on the other, it is the human mind, its development and education, gaining experience, research, concepts, discoveries, inventions, and the noblest creations" (pp. LXXIV–LXXV).

The pragmatic method constitutes the norm for Eichhorn too, but with a significant addition which reflects the debate taking place during the 1790s in the historiography of philosophy concerning the possibility of creating an *a priori* historiography. If, as we have seen, pragmatic history designates the activity of the philosopher in building a system or several systems of causes aimed at identifying the line of evolution along which events are dependent upon one another, then the system of explanation should not descend from above as if it were a set of *a priori* elements known before the facts. As Eichhorn observes, the fundamental prerequisite of the *Culturgeschichte* is undoubtedly "man's moral refinement" (*die moralische Veredelung des Menschen*), in relation to which historical progress must be judged. Yet, the adoption of this general rule should not be applied to the interpretation of all facts, but only to the overall historical framework; otherwise, history would turn into a "declamatory work", as in the case of Bossuet's *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*. By contrast, the historian must remain faithful to the facts, an analysis of which must lead to the teleological principle of history and not the other way around: "A historian who is conditioned from the moral viewpoint will be easily tempted to excessively hasten man's attainment of the ultimate end of his existence and indicate it in a place where it manifestly is not. To my mind, a historian should limit himself merely to the facts and let them speak for themselves; if they are properly described, the ultimate end will, on the whole, come to light by itself: and this must suffice. It seems to me that any other discussion is not history, but application of history to particular purposes" (p. LXXXII).

(d) *Theoretical and methodological essays*

In Germany, reflection on the nature, methods, and aims of the historiography of philosophy developed with particular intensity towards both the beginning and the end of the eighteenth century, encouraged in part by the appearance of two specialist reviews in this field, namely, Heumann's *Acta philosophorum* (1715–1727) and Fülleborn's *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie* (1791–1799). In the interval between these two reviews, contributions on this subject appeared less frequently but were nevertheless significant and indicative. Indeed, the *Dissertatio praeliminaris* to Brucker's *Historia critica* represents the systemization and climax of the historiographical theory elaborated during the earlier Enlightenment (see *Models*, II, pp. 484–494), whereas the two dissertations by Christian Garve (1742–1798), published in Leipzig in 1768 and 1770, almost 30 years after the *Historia*



*critica*, can be viewed as the programmatic manifesto of the new historiographical tendencies taking shape during the later eighteenth century, which were to culminate in Dieterich Tiedemann's *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*.<sup>25</sup>

During his short period of academic activity at the University of Leipzig (1766–1772), Garve concerned himself with the historiography of philosophy in two different stages. Firstly, on his appointment to the chair of philosophy, he wrote the dissertation *De ratione scribendi historiam philosophiae* (Leipzig: Litteris Breitkopfianis, 1768). As becomes clear from the very first lines of the work, Garve distances himself from Brucker. Considering how much he had hoped to benefit from the study of the history of philosophy, which – according to a well-known formula – was expected to provide “a certain kind of history of the human mind”, Garve has to admit his disappointment: “In that vast and magnificent apparatus I could find nothing other than the lives of the philosophers, aridly written, with a list of mere opinions. This was certainly what I expected, but I also expected several other things which might have been expressed in a different way too” (*De ratione*, p. 4). Furthermore, the works available at the time were insufficient from the viewpoint of the historical reconstruction of the doctrines and the criticism of sources. The subject deserved greater attention and diligence: “The history of philosophy is the account of the various alterations undergone by human science from the beginnings to our age. And in order to be able to detect in every thing the causes for which science has changed, we have to have a thorough knowledge of the path by which nature leads man to science” (p. 6).

What distinguishes this definition of the history of philosophy from that formulated by Brucker – on which it is based, however – is the change in the object of history (no longer the *intellectus humanus* but *scientia humana*) and, moreover, the reiteration of the changes that science seems to have experienced historically, whereas Brucker intended to ascertain how the intellect had come “to know truth and happiness” (Brucker, I, p. 21). This results in a change in the organization of the historical work: “Hence, a twofold question is put forward within the history of philosophy. First, what was the science of each age and each philosopher; and secondly, where did that science arise from, which path led to it, and what was eventually obtained, starting from it?” The first part of the historical work is, as it were, descriptive (“The first part consists entirely in narrating”) and consists in reporting the amount of knowledge which is proper to each age and each philosopher. To attain this end, it is not desirable to provide uninterrupted quotations which would break the development of the discourse and overload it, nor is it considered necessary to give a reconstruction of the system by philosophemes, according to a logical but arbitrary order; what is most important is to come to know

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Gueroult, II, p. 359: “Si ces plans restent pour le moment sans réalisation, et si leur influence effective, à titre de programme ne se fera sentir qu’une vingtaine d’années plus tard (avec Tiedemann), ils constituent en tout cas, pour l’histoire de la philosophie, la promesse de temps nouveaux”. On Garve’s philosophical activity in the context of *Popularphilosophie* and on his controversies with Kant, cf. Boehr, *Philosophie für die Welt*, pp. 88–104; see also DECGPh, pp. 372–381.



the ideas and sentiments of the author, not his words and formulas: “Indeed, we do not wish to know what was affirmed but rather what was thought by each author. For this reason, whenever there is a risk of finding no sense in the words which each author used to explain his opinion, or of finding a foreign sense assigned to them, then things must be somehow divested of the words which have been imposed on them and be instead clothed in a language most appropriate to the minds of present-day human beings and extremely clear to us. This thing, which is of great importance is, however, greatly neglected” (*De ratione*, p. 9; the same caution can be found in Tiedemann, cf. below, Sect. 9.5.4.4).

The second goal that a historian should pursue is more complex: it requires establishing the relationship between the different periods and philosophers, so as to identify the line of progress followed by human knowledge. “We still have to explain the second (part), which involves teaching first of all the reasons why human science originated in the universe, increased and distinguished itself for the diversity of its opinions, and finally either fell into idle talk or went back to its infancy; we have then to explain which things each philosopher based himself on to develop his arguments and which circumstances relating to time, place, or to his own mind, induced him to formulate the doctrines he adhered to”. Garve points out quite clearly not only what the main task of historians of philosophy is – namely, to outline the progress of science – but also which method they should follow, a method which has been defined as ‘pragmatic’ and consists of searching for the connection and causal link between doctrines: “On the other hand, since human science is like a chain, whose ring is close to another ring, by which it is linked to all the other rings, it is absolutely necessary to know from which ring of the chain each [author] began and how much he received that had already been explained and achieved by the chain itself” (*De ratione*, pp. 18–20).

In the final part of his essay, Garve traces an outline of ancient historiography of philosophy, in which he clearly points out the stages in the gradual progress of human knowledge. The German translation of this appeared at the end of the century in Fülleborn’s review.<sup>26</sup> Recourse to an analogy between the life of an individual and the development of science, already present in Heumann and Brucker (see *Models*, II, pp. 417–418 and 514), is here complemented by the study of the psychological features following on from one another during the different ages. Garve particularly emphasizes the phase of decline, old age, and death, viewing them as moments of life which are as necessary as childhood and maturity. This results in a different conception of the history of philosophy, in which the criterion of progress is replaced by that of development, and which is relatively close to the view of the history of mankind as an organic whole defended by Herder in *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte*: “The same constancy of nature visible in the

<sup>26</sup>Cf. C. Garve, *Ueber die Geschichte der Philosophie. Eine Stelle aus dessen Lateinscher Abhandlung De ratione...*, BGPh, IX (1799), pp. 148–163. Subsequently, the same review published the two dissertations by Garve in their original and complete edition; cf. BGPH, XI (1799), pp. 88–196.

progression of other things, whereby some things always follow others in the same order, is preserved in the increases and decreases of human knowledge. It begins with birth, then infancy, childhood, adolescence, maturity, old age, decrepitude, and death" (*De ratione*, p. 21).<sup>27</sup>

In the East and in ancient Greece we find "the incunabula and early attempts at philosophy", "opinions and rites rather than doctrines and precepts" (p. 23), that is, a reflection not built on rational bases but on sense, and conditioned by the needs of existence. Later on, the Greeks gave philosophy a political function and directed it towards the study of nature; with Socrates it acquired the form of a science and was placed under the laws of reason. Plato and Aristotle extended philosophy to every field of reality, exceeding its natural limits; then came the phase of decline and old age, which saw the rise of many conflicting systems reducible to three classes which, adopting Kant's terminology that Garve appears somehow to anticipate, we might define as grouping the rationalists, the Sceptics, and the empiricists: "Nature itself oriented them towards three different types of knowledge and method. Some, bringing everything back to reason and declaring almost everything that they had received from their predecessors to be certain, did not devote themselves to finding new things but rather to defining, subdividing, and demonstrating ancient things. Others, also guided by the arguments of dialectic and deceived by their very erudition and eloquence, disputed everything in whichever sense, and denied everything that could be perceived. Finally, others, endowed with a more refined sensibility and a sort of weakness of the mind, placed all the strength of the mind on sensation. [...] It was in this way that, once the circle leading philosophy from the simplicity of sense to the subtlety of demonstration was completed, philosophy gradually began to deteriorate among the Greeks and, after it was handed over to the Romans, it was preserved by the latter and directed to the civil use rather than transformed or expanded" (pp. 26–27).

The title of the second dissertation seems to adhere to the themes and structure of the previous one: *Legendorum philosophorum veterum praecepta nonnulla et exemplum* (Leipzig: Litteris Breitkopfianis, 1770). It begins paradoxically and apparently in contrast with the theories presented above. The history of philosophy is less useful to the philosopher than civil history is to the politician; the latter makes use of the examples drawn from the past in order to broaden his experience and find models to be used in action. By contrast, philosophy, which is the search for truth, cannot rest on thoughts and opinions elaborated by others: "All this is quite different in Philosophy. Since the purpose of philosophy is the investigation of truth and diligence in enquiring and searching, it cannot be satisfied with opinions and

<sup>27</sup> Another similarity with Herder appears in the 'Theses' which close the dissertation, where the author addresses, *inter alia*, the theme of the relationship between the history of language and the history of philosophy: "Ut populi ingenium et ad scientiam progressio, linguae naturam constituit: ita etiam ex natura linguae potest cognosci, quid cuiusque populi scriptores eximium habuerint, et quare in suo quisque dicendi scribendique genere excelluerit. Accurata cognitio cuiuscunque linguae complectitur etiam cognitionem earum rerum, quae ab populo cuius est lingua, maxime tractatae et excultae sunt" (*De ratione*, p. 27).

ideas held by others. And the Philosopher's name and function cannot be preserved by he who does not employ the activity of his mind in the exploration of things" (*Legendorum*, p. 4). A history of philosophy is only conceivable in relation to the notions that the intellect derives from external things; in that case, it would not be a history of philosophy but a history of natural science. By contrast, when philosophy is understood as it should be understood, as the "science of human things", we must reject historical information as useless and even damaging, because all its concepts can be acquired through the mind's reflection upon itself: "Hence, the source of the science of human things is within ourselves. And this science is only possessed by he who draws it from himself. Having a knowledge of the opinions of others helps very little in attaining it, and hampers it greatly. Indeed, it diverts it and orients it towards remote and extraneous things, and through the variety of opinions it distracts the mind which should have remained within itself and turn to the nearest things" (p. 6).

The history of philosophy is not interesting by virtue of its content, but because it can induce the mind to seek truth within itself. In order to attain this end it is fruitless to acquire a knowledge of the doctrines elaborated by philosophers; rather, what really matters is to read the works of ancient philosophers themselves (*philosophorum veterum lectio valet*). The doctrines provide only opinions and the theories put forward by the schools; the works reveal the intelligence and the heart of great men. It is not important to know doctrines as such, nor whether they are true or false; indeed, what matters is no longer to take up suggestions and the seeds of truth, as was the case in the perspective of the previous, eclectically oriented, historiography, but to be induced to conduct a personal search for the truth, an impulse which arises from an encounter with the life and intellectual experience of great individuals, that enthusiasm which inflames the mind and induces it to imitation: "This enthusiasm (ἐνθουσιασμός) of intelligences brings about the same effect as a flame in a combustible substance: an explosion of latent virtue. However, matter cannot receive the flame unless through the proximity or contact of fire; mind and intelligence certainly can stir themselves towards knowledge, especially if already trained to do so, but we are able to discover ourselves only when we have previously practised by contemplating an excellent work produced by the intelligence of someone else" (p. 8).

But the use of the historiography of philosophy does not only lie in its maieutic action: it comprises "some part of science as well" pertaining to the fundamental philosophical doctrine, which – according to Garve and the "popular philosophers" – is anthropology. "First of all we notice the differences between the human intelligences and the diverse forms in the way of thinking; then we recognize the progress and path followed by human reason in knowing truth. [...] In the second place it is a very valuable part of the history of humanity. Since there are two things in man through which it is possible to achieve all that which makes life beautiful, reason and civil society, one if these is contained in civil history, and the other in the history of philosophy" (p. 10). In the former case, the history of philosophy is understood as a discipline auxiliary to the science of man; in the latter case, together with civil history, it forms part of the history of man. Man, in his individual and historical existence, is the element connecting the two perspectives,

the latter of which – that which views the history of philosophy as a section of the history of mankind (or of the philosophy of history) – subordinates the former to itself, since progress is more clearly perceivable when it concerns the genus rather than the individual: “Now, the course which each of us follows from infancy and the weakness of our earlier age to the prudence and power of mature age is identical with the course followed by the whole of mankind from barbarism and ignorance of all things to culture and science. [...] From the history of mankind we have to learn the history of the intelligence of each of us, especially because we recall obscurely the age during which nature outlined our intelligence and mind” (p. 11).

After complaining about the inadequacy of contemporary historiography and declaring, once more, that he preferred reading the original works of the philosophers to deriving information from general histories and school textbooks, Garve presents an *exemplum* of how to deal with the history of philosophy, and to this end relates the contents of *Theaetetus*. This Platonic dialogue is summarized so as to preserve the dynamism and significance of the arguments, and yet with no concern for citing passages or using the terminology peculiar to the author. As a commentary on the dialogue, whose subject is the value of sensible knowledge, the author provides a short survey of the epistemological problem in Antiquity and the modern age. Pristine, unlimited trust in sense gradually disappeared due to its mutability. A distinction was then made between thing and image, sensible object and sensation; but not all philosophers were willing to seek the criterion of truth in this relationship. The distinction – already present in the previous essay – between empiricists (Heraclitus, Democritus, Epicurus) and rationalists (Parmenides and Plato) reappears here: “Starting from this principle, Philosophers followed two routes to seek truth in the mind. Some applied themselves to exploring the nature of the senses more accurately and to looking for the character and sign of truth in the senses themselves; others left the senses to one side and devoted themselves entirely to the contemplation of the faculty of intelligence and the thoughts collected within the mind” (p. 28). Aristotle tried to unite these two methods of proceeding: “Aristotle appeared and somehow connected the reasons of either tendency” (p. 32).

The positions held by the ancients were taken up in the modern age, and it could not have been otherwise: “Indeed, the circle of opinions pertaining to this question had been almost entirely trodden, and every other possibility of conjecture and imagination had been exhausted too” (p. 34). Democritus’ distinction between primary and secondary qualities was put forward again, while Leibniz returned to Plato by asserting the existence of innate ideas, although, citing the *Nouveaux essais* which had recently been made available in Raspe’s edition (1765), Garve believes it is possible to reconcile Locke with Leibniz: “In the Prolegomena [to the *New Essays on Human Understanding*], he overtly says that what he declares to be innate ideas differ slightly from the notions that Locke terms notions of reflection. Indeed, he thus defines the ideas that the mind, turning its strength towards itself, grasps somehow like a reflected ray” (p. 36).

Reflections on the concept and methods of the historiography of philosophy as precise and organic as those formulated by Garve were not to be found again for at least two decades, until the 1790s. However, some other considerations, especially

of a methodological nature, are worth mentioning. Among them let us cite an article by Michael Hissmann, published in *Der teutsche Merkur*: ‘Bemerkungen über einige Regeln für den Geschichtsschreiber philosophischer Systeme; über Dutens Untersuchungen; –und über die angebohrnen Begriffe des Plato, Deskartes und Leibniz’s’ (TM, IV, 1777, pp. 22–52). The subject is typical of Enlightenment historiography: how to establish the contribution made by each thinker to the progress of knowledge, thereby avoiding the two extremes of either ascribing to the ancients all the discoveries made by the moderns or asserting the absolute originality of modern thought. The former theory is considered to be characteristic of French historiography, notably that of Dutens, whose *Recherches sur l’origine des découvertes attribuées aux modernes* (Paris, 1766; German transl.: Leipzig, 1772) were judged by Hissmann to be even worse “than the flat and uncritical history of philosophy written by the provincial-minded Deslandes, as Voltaire calls him” (*Bemerkungen*, p. 25). The whole of French historiography (Deslandes, Batteux, Dutens, on whom see *Models*, II, pp. 177–211, and above, Sect. 2.3; Ch. 3, Introd., a) is dominated by this prejudice: “French historians of philosophy appear to be all infected by the mania of depriving the heroes of the modern and contemporary age of all merits, and they place them in the urn containing the ashes of philosophical Antiquity. According to this way of thinking, every important doctrine has existed since the very beginning of the world” (*Bemerkungen*, p. 32).

Against Dutens’ theory, Hissmann observes that most modern philosophers and scientists (except Leibniz) ignored ancient philosophy, and, in any case, the union of “genius” and “erudition” is an exceptional event; secondly, if we compare ancient doctrines with modern ones, it appears that their meaning differs so much that the analogy applies almost only to words and formulas. This is exemplified by the theory of ideas in Plato, Descartes, and Leibniz (pp. 33–52). Here we have three different conceptions, and of the three, Leibniz’s is absolutely original when compared with the other two. “Leibniz grants the human soul greater power in forming innate ideas than Plato and Descartes. [...] Within the Leibnizian system, the soul is not only the source of these ideas, but also the only creative power originating them. Before Leibniz, ideas and innate principles had the privilege of always being admitted as true without proof. Leibniz does not grant them this great quality. Rather, he goes over their demonstration, thus refuting the objections with which Locke ridiculed the doctrine held by his adversaries” (pp. 51–52).

Hissmann goes back to the problem of the progress of philosophy in the ‘Vorbericht’ to his *Geschichte der Lehre von der Association der Ideen* (Göttingen, 1777). Some believe that “the kingdom of truth always had the same boundaries” and therefore the history of philosophy cannot provide new truths but only new elaborations of truths already known from the beginning. In short, according to this theory, there would seem to be no real progress. Hissmann objects that the multiplicity of philosophical schools presupposes real diversity between doctrines; secondly, he observes that the great philosophers of Antiquity are like eagles: they suck the purest blood from their prey, then deliver the remains to vultures and other birds they despise; by contrast, the moderns chew truths over and over until there is no sap left in them (*bis gar kein Saft mehr in ihnen ist*). Hence, a

part of knowledge is absolutely new, whereas other parts of knowledge, which is what happens most frequently, is nothing other than an analysis and explanation of previous knowledge already known by intuition. The doctrine of the association of ideas is reckoned to be among the latter. Indeed, against the opinion of the English philosophers (notably Hume), which is due to a mediocre knowledge of the ancients (*bey einer mittelmässigen Kenntniss der Alten*), it is possible to prove that “it is within everything excellent that remains of philosophical Antiquity that we can find the clearest traces of the doctrine concerning the association of ideas” (*Geschichte der Lehre*, ‘Vorbericht’, p. 6).

The task assigned to the historian of philosophy is to distinguish, within the field of knowledge, the contribution made by each philosopher and to show the paths and steps of progress. The doctrines elaborated by those who come before usually provide the experience on which their successors can base themselves in order to discover and formulate principles with general validity. This process becomes manifest in the transition from Eastern to Greek thought, but also from Greek to modern thought: “Relying on sure historical testimonies, we know that in Greece the wise men acquired certain knowledge on the banks of the Nile. But I think that the erudite knowledge that Thales, Pythagoras, and the other Greeks obtained from the Egyptian priests was just individual observations (*als einzelne Beobachtungen*) which they were the first to transform into scientific knowledge (*in wissenschaftliche Kenntnisse*), whereas the Egyptians themselves were unable to complete this creation. [...] It is therefore absolutely certain that the Greeks, who transmitted the most ordinary knowledge to the Egyptian people, drew from the latter nothing other than experiences (*Erfahrungen*) that they were subsequently able to use scientifically (*wissenschaftlich zu benutzen*). Likewise, the enlightened Greeks showed experiences to later philosophers who used them advantageously, just as the Greeks had done with Egyptian knowledge” (pp. 9–10).

A short *Oratio* by Franz Volkmar Reinhard discusses the problem of the most appropriate method for teaching the history of philosophy at university: *De coniungenda cum tradendis philosophiae placitis eorundem historia* (Wittenberg: Lit. A. Ch. Charisii, 1780).<sup>28</sup> The method most commonly followed up to that point might be defined as the “general history of philosophy”, which was the method adopted by Stanley and Brucker, who transcribed the lives and systems of

<sup>28</sup>Born in Vohenstrauß, in the Duchy of Sulzbach, Franz Volkmar Reinhard (1753–1812) completed his studies in Wittenberg, where in 1780 he was appointed professor of philosophy and where he had among his pupils Gottlob Ernst Schulze, the famous author of *Aenesidemus*. Later on, his theological interests prevailed, and for a decade he taught theology in Wittenberg and was then assigned the post of main preacher at the Saxon court in Dresden. The collection of his sermons, in 35 volumes, was published from 1795 to 1812 in Wittenberg and Sulzbach and represents his most famous literary production; in addition, let us mention his works in the fields of ethics and dogmatics: *Versuch über den Plan, welchen der Stifter der christlichen Religion zum Besten der Menschheit entwarf* (Wittenberg, 1781); *System der christlichen Moral* (Wittenberg, 1788–1810), 4 vols; *Vorlesungen über die Dogmatik* (Amberg and Sulzbach, 1801). Cf. ADB, XXVIII, pp. 32–35.

the philosophers according to a temporal order; but in this way, warns Reinhard, “they appear to have written not so much the *history of philosophy* as the *history of philosophers*”. Reinhard instead prefers the perspective adopted by the “special histories”: “Another way of dealing with the history of philosophy consists – after setting aside all that which concerns the lives of individual philosophers – in concisely teaching what each discipline possessed of its own, what contribution each philosopher provided either to the emendation and enlargement of human knowledge or to its corruption and disruption; and in what way, little by little, thanks to the joint work of the greatest men, mankind was perfected and educated so as to give rise to that form of philosophy and build those doctrinal edifices which are now predominantly celebrated” (*De coniungenda*, p. 6). The reason for this choice is twofold: first of all, it provides the possibility of better determining the progress of human knowledge, which can be viewed in its concreteness by following the changes undergone by each philosophical discipline. Yet, the main reason is of a didactic nature: a history of philosophy thus framed can be more easily employed by a teacher of philosophical disciplines for illustrating doctrines by using examples derived from history: “It is totally evident that he who learnt philosophy in this way sees many things more rightly and more accurately than he who, besides doctrines, did not listen to anything else. Indeed, he can see what the human mind valued in all ages and how philosophy, in its present form, gradually started to establish itself. This greatly helps clarity” (pp. 9–10).

Reinhard seems not to recommend the use of textbooks on the history of philosophy on an academic level, or at least he declares that it is more helpful to combine historical studies with theoretical and systematic works. This perspective was adopted by Ernst Platner (1744–1818) in the second edition of his *Aphorismen*, published under the title: *Philosophische Aphorismen nebst einigen Anleitungen zur philosophischen Geschichte. Ganz neue Aufarbeitung* (Leipzig, 1793–1800, 2 vols). When the author has recourse to history, he inserts it (in smaller type size) into the paragraphs – each of which is devoted to a specific theoretical question – with the purpose of beginning to comment on doctrines and set the philosophical debate of his time in a proper context. For example, one of these historical digressions concerns the relationship between theoretical and practical philosophy (*Philosophische Aphorismen*, I, pp. 14–16). After mentioning the division of philosophy in Antiquity and pointing out the fundamental validity of the Aristotelian subdivisions, Platner addresses the question of the relationship, in Kant, between pure reason and practical reason, and concludes by stating that the latter, since it takes the place of metaphysics, has no autonomy at all but is part of theoretical philosophy.<sup>29</sup>

We will conclude this section by moving to a different cultural context, namely, that of Austria in the second half of the eighteenth century, which had frequent,

<sup>29</sup>E. Platner, *Philosophische Aphorismen*, I, p. 16: “Seinen Begriffen und seinen Worthbestimmungen nach würde Herr Kant die Moralphilosophie mit zu der ersten rechnen, weil sie bey ihm zu der Beantwortung der ersten, angelegentlichsten Fragen des Menschen in der Welt, statt der Metaphysik dienet”.

animated interaction with the German cultural world. The interest in the historiography of philosophy can be seen here above all in the publication of the two volumes constituting the *Litterargeschichte des Ursprungs und Fortganges der Philosophie* (Graz, 1788–1789) by Franz Xaver Gmeiner (see above, Sect. 8.7). An essay by Andreas Joseph Hofmann, published in Vienna where he resided for a short time (though his hometown was Würzburg) before being expelled due to his political activity, can be considered as an introduction to this work<sup>30</sup>: *Ueber das Studium der philosophischen Geschichte* (Vienna: bey den edlen von Ghelenschen Erben, 1779). Hofmann clearly names his sources: Brucker, Formey, Deslandes, and especially Steinacher (see above, Sect. 8.3), whom he recognizes as having been the first to introduce the study of the history of philosophy into the Catholic universities of Germany, “a subject previously totally unknown” (*Ueber das Studium*, p. 4 note). With his essay, Hofmann wished to promote a reform of philosophical teaching in Austrian universities, following the model of Würzburg, where, after the dissolution of the Jesuit order, a chair of the History of Philosophy had been established (p. 62). Indeed, the history of philosophy deserves to be taught as a subject apart, as well as *Reichshistorie* and *Kirchengeschichte* (p. 60 note). The central issue, which is reiterated in the titles of the three sections, is therefore that of the use of the history of philosophy: 1. ‘Von dem Nutzen der Geschichte überhaupt’ (pp. 1–25); 2. ‘Von dem Einflusse der philosophischen Geschichte auf alle Theile der Philosophie’ (pp. 25–63); 3. ‘Von dem Nutzen der philosophischen Geschichte für die Jurisprudenz, Medizin und Theologie’ (pp. 64–104).

The essay opens with a definition of the history of philosophy which is largely taken from Brucker: “The history of philosophy, if considered in a broader sense, is the history of the human intellect (*die Geschichte des menschlichen Verstandes*) and, as Formey affirms, if only the path of truth had been trod and pursued without falling into error, it might also be defined as the history of truth (*die Geschichte der Wahrheit*). [...] It not only teaches us how the spiritual powers of man gradually developed, but also shows us each science in its decline and advancement (*jede Wissenschaft in ihrer Ab- und Zunahme*), it leads us through all its ages, provides us with an exact knowledge of every famous man in the republic of the learned, describing with impartiality his character and merits in spreading some truth or other which proved useful to man, it accompanies us through the philosophical systems of Antiquity and the modern age, offers us the key to interpreting several principles on which the other sciences are based, and shows us the way we have to take in order to foster the happiness of our fellow citizens by means of literary knowledge”

<sup>30</sup>Joseph Andreas Hofmann (1753–1849) was the head of the Mainz revolutionary movement of 1792–1793, which demanded the annexation of Rhineland to France. In 1784, after the Vienna period, he became professor of the Philosophy of History at the University of Mainz and in 1791 also professor of Law. He was appointed to various political positions in the Napoleonic period, then retired to Winkel am Rhein, where he died in 1849. Among his other works let us mention: *Sätze aus der Philosophie* (Mainz, 1782); *Sätze aus der Staatsklugheit* (Mainz, 1786); *Ueber Fürstenregiment und Landstände* (Mainz, 1792). Cf. ADB, XII, pp. 625–626; NDB, IX, p. 446.



(*Ueber das Studium*, pp. 4–6). The first use is of a negative kind and influences the theological themes: rather than a history of truth, the history of philosophy is a history of mistakes and prejudices (*die Geschichte der Irrthümer und Vorurtheile*), as demonstrated by the doctrines of the once highly celebrated ancient philosophers with reference to the nature of God, the existence of the soul after death, and the concept of virtue. Hofmann's conclusion is in accordance with Buddeus (cf. *Models*, II, pp. 349–350): the history of philosophy is an indispensable tool for the theologian who intends to prove the need for revelation against the self-sufficiency of reason proclaimed by free thinkers (*Ueber das Studium*, pp. 8–9).

The second section lists the advantages that the historiography of philosophy has provided for the study of philosophy. Hofmann clearly prefers the modern philosophers, both with reference to logic (whose main object is the doctrine of ideas and method as formulated by Locke and Descartes, whereas a negative example of logic seems to be the syllogistic process and dialectic) and to metaphysics and psychology, whose models are Spinoza and Leibniz, Tiedemann and Eberhard, respectively. By contrast, scholars of natural science should pay greater attention to the ancients: indeed, in most cases, the moderns have simply improved on the discoveries and ideas of the ancients, such as universal gravitation, the periscope, or solar eclipses. It is therefore correct to conclude, together with Dutens, that “hundreds of things of which [the moderns] pretend to be the inventors are nothing other than opinions already held by the ancients” (p. 50).

The final section – dealing with the use of the historiography of philosophy for jurisprudence, medicine, and theology – clearly shows the preference and tendencies of Hofmann as a reader and admirer of Montesquieu who, while engaging in argument against Voltaire and the free thinkers, does not fail to point out the defects of the theology of his time, even the official one, coming to contrast theology with the Church, and doctrinal disputes with Christian morals and practice. “We know”, observes Hofmann, “that the authority of our Church, upon which, as it were, everything depends, largely rests on its infallibility – although not that of its individual constituents – and on divine objects, not on physical ones. But its intended purpose was perhaps to extend this authority to the latter as well, and it therefore interfered with the systems of philosophical novelties, which fell into the fields of geography and astronomy and, since it could not reconcile the latter with some of the theories of Holy Scripture, which was supposed to include physics as well, it took as real a contradiction which was only apparent and raised itself up as a judge of the natural sciences, but experience proved the contrary” (pp. 91–92). What value can still be accorded to the infallibility of the Church? Who was right: Columbus or the theological council of the king of Spain, Galileo or the tribunal of the Inquisition? “Our task”, a theologian rendered cautious by the study of the history of philosophy would thus conclude, “is to preach the sacred dogmas with virtue and by setting an example, to prove the divinity by using the Bible, not by geographical and philosophical propositions; let us limit ourselves to the object once assigned to us, to the moral intent laid down for us when we were appointed, and our enemies will be eternally forced to silence” (pp. 93–94).

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## 9.1 Johann Georg Heinrich Feder (1740–1821) *Grundriss der philosophischen Wissenschaften*

**9.1.1** Born in Schornweissach, near Neustadt an der Aisch (Bayern), on 15th May, 1740, Feder studied at the University of Erlangen, where he was a pupil of Simon Gabriel Suckow, who tended towards Wolffianism. He worked for a few years as a private tutor and became acquainted with Rousseau's writings; in 1765, he was appointed professor of morals and metaphysics at the *Casimirianum* in Coburg and, in 1768, regular professor of philosophy at the University of Göttingen. He devoted himself to intense literary activity and was a correspondent and collaborator on the main journals of the time, but his fame chiefly rests on his production of excellent, highly-regarded textbooks of philosophy. After 1780, due to the bitter polemic against Kant and his followers, Feder's prestige rapidly declined, and in 1797 he was forced to abandon his university career. He subsequently became director of the *Georgianum* in Hanover, a position he held until 1811. He was held responsible for the review of the *Critique of Pure Reason* – written by Garve and reworked by him – which appeared in the *Göttingische Anzeigen*, where he edited the section

on philosophical studies. He proved to be a poor interpreter of critical philosophy and even went so far as to define the *Critique* as a work which did not respond to the spirit of the age; yet he was receptive and far-sighted with respect to another new work published at the end of the century, which was to influence the history of European thought – Adam Smith’s *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, a work he was the first to publicise in Germany. He died in Hanover on 22nd May, 1821, aged over eighty.

**9.1.2** Feder’s philosophical work is well documented: on one hand, he was the author of well-known textbooks of philosophy, which were widely used in German universities at the end of the century; on the other, he is famous for his polemic against Kant and critical philosophy. His earlier works do not deal with philosophical questions but, under the influence of Rousseau, discuss pedagogical themes: *Homo natura non ferus*, Diss. (Erlangen, 1765); *Der neue Emil, oder von der Erziehung nach bewährten Grundsätzen* (Erlangen, 1768–1771, 2 vols). The first and most famous of his textbooks is also related to teaching activity: *Grundriss der philosophischen Wissenschaften, nebst der nöthigen Geschichte zum Gebrauch seiner Zuhörer* (Coburg: verl. Johann Carl Findeisen, 1767; 1769<sup>2</sup>). It was thanks to this work, as well as the influence of the Leipzig philologist J.A. Ernesti, that Feder was offered the chair of philosophy at the University of Göttingen. The value of his work does not lie in its originality from a philosophical viewpoint; rather, it was appreciated because it met a need for clarity which was felt at the time and because it proved to be particularly effective as a teaching aid.

Feder’s philosophical perspective clarified itself over time. Feder was initially a pupil of Suckow, who tended towards Wolffianism; but in Coburg, and then in Göttingen, he became acquainted with non-Wolffian authors, such as Samuel Christian Hollmann, Christian August Crusius, and Joachim Georg Darjes. As a consequence of reading these authors, but thanks also to the influence of the French and English thinkers (Montesquieu, Helvétius, Hume, A. Smith), Feder lost interest in metaphysics, and he seemed willing to admit it merely as “general science or ontology” containing the general principles from which the other sciences arise. He found himself in perfect accord with Kant’s *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*, but not with the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which he considered to be a mere re-proposal of Berkeley’s idealism. Feder led the group of anti-Kantians (Eberhard, Tiedemann, Meiners, etc.), who were to a great extent those historians of philosophy for whom, Kant warned, “the present Prolegomena have not been written”. The author of the review of the *Critique of Pure Reason* was in fact Garve, but Feder, who abridged and revised it, undoubtedly shared his judgement: Kant’s system is idealistic and, like all idealisms, is contrary to common sense and to the intellect’s natural way of thinking. The middle path to take in order to remedy the aporias of Scepticism and dogmatism, idealism and materialism, is not transcendental idealism (the reviewers, Kant was to protest, totally failed to understand his book, as demonstrated by their misunderstanding of the term “transcendental”, which they simply took as a synonym of ‘superior’ or ‘transcendent’); it is, rather, philosophical realism, which acknowledges the qualities of inner sense and outer sense without confusion and undue reductions (see GA, ‘Zugabe’ I [1782], pp. 40–48; repr. in *Rezensionen*

zur Kantischen Philosophie 1781–1787, ed. A. Landau, Bebra, 1991, pp. 10–17; English transl. in Sassen, *Kant's Early Critics*, pp. 53–58).

The polemic with Kant was subsequently developed in the work *Ueber Raum und Causalität, zur Prüfung der kantischen Philosophie* (Göttingen, 1787; repr. Bruxelles, 1968), in which Feder examines the two concepts of space and cause in order to defend the existence of “real things outside ourselves”. He reiterates the accusations of idealism and Scepticism and claims that his position concerning the concept of causality is a middle position between Hume and Kant – in reality, an unstable and problematic equidistance. Also noteworthy are the observations formulated by Feder concerning the *Critique of Practical Reason* (about which see also the essay *Ueber die kantische Moraltheologie*, in PhB, III (1790), pp. 13–66) and Reinhold's *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens*.

His most important philosophical work bears the title *Untersuchungen über den menschlichen Willen, dessen Naturtriebe, Veränderlichkeit, Verhältniss zur Tugend und Glückseligkeit, und die Grundregeln, die menschlichen Gemüther zu erkennen und zu regieren* (Lemgo, 1779–1793, 4 vols; repr. Bruxelles, 1968), a work which, according to its Italian translator (*Ricerche analitiche sul cuore umano*, Brescia, 1821–1822, 5 vols), still represented in the early nineteenth century the most extensive and thorough work on this type of subject, even better than the French and English models which the author, however, keeps in view. All science must rest on anthropology, that is to say, on the study of man and his nature, as Socrates had taught and Hume had stated in his *Treatise of Human Nature*. The method to follow is the inductive experimental method, not an abstract definition of man, but the observation of one's own inner states, subsequently to be compared with the experiences of others. The last two volumes, published in a period highly influenced by Kant, in 1786 and 1793 respectively, see Feder defending his ethical doctrine from the attacks it had received from Kant and the Kantians. We need to begin with reason, it is true, but this reason is the reason of concrete man, spatially and temporally conditioned in his motives and in his choices. Hence it is necessary to add material motives to his formal motives, linked to man's emotional and sentimental nature. The contrast that Kant posits between the principles of morality and sensible motives is, for Feder, wrong, or as he terms it, “specious”. In reality, there is no opposition (*Gegensatz*) between reason and sensibility, but merely a simple difference (*Unterschied*), just as sensible motives are different from one another (Feder, *Untersuchungen*, vol. III, 1786, p. 200). The plan of this work is wide-ranging and ambitious: it deals with the fundamental laws governing the human will, the relationship between intellect and will, freedom, the feeling of sympathy, the inclinations of the mind both in relation to oneself (the doctrine of beauty and imagination) and to others (friendship and hatred), the variety of the mind and its causes (the influence of the environment), happiness, the law, the State, and finally with education and virtue.

Besides the publication of Leibniz's letters, *Commercii epistolici Leibnitiani typis nondum vulgati selecta specimina* (Hannover, 1805), it is worth mentioning the various textbooks: *Logik und Metaphysik* (Göttingen, 1769; 1783<sup>3</sup>); *Lehrbuch der praktischen Philosophie* (Göttingen, 1770); *Institutiones logicae et metaphysicae*

(Gottingae, 1777); *Grundlehren zur Kenntniss des menschlichen Willens* (Göttingen, 1782; 1785<sup>2</sup>); see also G.A. Tittel, *Erläuterungen der theoretischen und praktischen Philosophie nach Herrn Feders Ordnung* (Frankfurt a.M., 1783–1789, 1794<sup>3</sup>; repr. Bruxelles, 1973). As to Adam Smith's *Inquiry*, Feder describes this work as a "classic" and highlights its connection with, but also its superiority to, the French physiocratic school (GA, no. xxx (1777), pp. 234–240). Feder's observations and criticisms indicate that he was well-grounded in the field of political economy; although he did not entirely share some of Smith's theories, such as that of the absolute freedom granted to private enterprise, thanks to the ensuing debate he contributed to the dissemination of the theory of economic liberalism into German territory (see Marino, pp. 328–330).

**9.1.3** Feder was not the author of a true history of philosophy, but he frequently directed his attention to the field of the history of philosophy within his better-known literary activity (philosophical textbooks). More particularly, his *Grundriss der philosophischen Wissenschaften* contains an 'Einleitung zur philosophischen Historie', which is an outline of the history of philosophy; and the treatment of each philosophical discipline ends with a historical survey. There are also sections devoted to the history of philosophy in his other compendiums of philosophy and his *Untersuchungen über den menschlichen Willen*.

Feder's historical interest is chiefly motivated by the needs of university teaching: as he says in the 'Vorrede' to his *Grundriss*, he "merely" wishes to provide a helpful tool for introducing young people to the study of philosophy. However, besides his didactic need, what motivates him is also his belief that the study of history offers a valuable contribution to philosophical reflection. The subject of the *Grundriss der philosophischen Wissenschaften* is described as follows: "The object must be the history of philosophy and philosophers, the content of each philosophical science and its particular history, and finally a philosophical bibliography" (p. 13). It is worth pointing out this persistent reference to history precisely in a philosopher who is not, nor wishes to be, a historiographer. The history of philosophy is not only an introduction to the study of philosophy, but should also accompany thorough philosophical research because it clarifies the concepts and helps us to consider them in depth. In this regard, let us note the significant historical references which conclude each section devoted to the philosophical sciences. These short specific histories have no erudite or mnemonic traits; the philosopher Feder, who in his 'Einleitung zur philosophischen Historie' limits himself to summarizing Brucker schematically, introduces criteria of inquiry more congenial to him, of a philosophical and psychological nature. The history of logic is thus interpreted according to the phases of development of the human mind, and the history of metaphysics is derived "from the general history of the human intellect" (p. 142). But Feder rapidly comes to focus on the contemporary age, with the aim of outlining the issues addressed by the philosophical debate. Feder's activity in the field of the history of philosophy does not therefore meet any requirements of an erudite and archaeological character, but is driven, rather, by an immediate, current interest, with the object of developing an appropriate philosophical teaching and providing an essential aid to the activity of philosophy itself.



### 9.1.4 *Grundriss der philosophischen Wissenschaften*

**9.1.4.1** A short ‘Vorrede’ introduces the three sections which make up the work: 1. ‘Einleitung zur philosophischen Historie’, pp. 13–47; 2. ‘Grundriss der vornehmsten Theilen der Weltweisheit’, pp. 47–341; 3. ‘Beytrag zur philosophischen Bücherkenntniss’, pp. 342–368. The different parts are disproportionate to one another: the second takes up the greatest part of the text and is itself subdivided into five chapters, which are devoted respectively to the concept of philosophy (pp. 47–51), logic (pp. 52–80), metaphysics (pp. 80–151), physics (pp. 151–227), and practical philosophy (pp. 227–341). Each discipline concludes with a historical treatment: ‘Anhang von der Geschichte der Logik’ (pp. 75–80), ‘Anhang von der Geschichte der Metaphysik’ (pp. 142–151), ‘Geschichte der Naturlehre’ (pp. 220–227), ‘Geschichte der praktischen Weltweisheit’ (pp. 334–341). The last section, concerning the philosophical bibliography, is specifically intended to complete the ‘Bibliotheca philosophica Struviana’ published by Kahle in 1740 and presents the philosophical works which appeared between 1740 and 1767. The work has no indices and is divided into short paragraphs followed by few notes.

**9.1.4.2** Given the reasons underlying Feder’s historical interest, the periodization is not an object of his reflection, nor does it offer any original contribution. The short summary which opens the *Grundriss* reflects the traditional tripartition: from the origins of philosophy to the Roman Empire (the ancient period), the first fourteen centuries of the common era (the middle period), and from the Protestant Reformation to the eighteenth century (the modern period). Even the divisions within each period follow the order adopted by Brucker: for example, as regards modern philosophy, Feder first examines the attempts at reforming philosophy through the revival of the ancient schools, then the contribution provided by the eclectics (the “new fathers of philosophy”, as he calls them), from Giordano Bruno to Christian Thomasius. In only one case does Feder admit to not agreeing with his source: this concerns the position of Telesio and Bérigard, who in the *Historia critica* are numbered among the restorers of the Ionian school, but whom Feder would rather place among the eclectics and the Sceptics respectively. Furthermore, each particular history presents an internal subdivision which reflects the subject’s individuality. On the whole, mention is made of the classical age (Plato and Aristotle) and Scholasticism, but for the most part attention focuses on the philosophical debate which took place during the modern age.

**9.1.4.3** The historiographical theories are generally taken from the *Historia critica philosophiae*. Let us note, for example, the judgement passed on barbarian philosophy, considered to be nothing more than priestly deceit and superstition (p. 19); the negative appraisal of Scholasticism, seen as a jumble of barbarian expressions and subtle but idle theological and philosophical disputations (p. 32); and the theory concerning the “reform of philosophy”, mainly attributed to the eclectics, those who claimed the freedom to think (*die Freyheit zu denken*). According to Feder too, religious reform and Humanism represent the bases for modern philosophy because they removed the prejudices of Scholasticism and the

principle of authority. Greater originality characterizes the final part of the historical outline (where Feder indicates the sources of his own speculative position) and the specific histories, where he describes the origins, development, and present condition of each part of philosophy. The authors Feder refers to are Hollmann, Crusius, and Darjes, the “best” of contemporary eclectic philosophers since they managed to overcome the rigid rejections of Wolffian scholasticism. Against the dogmatism of Wolff’s followers, for whom there is only one true philosophy, Hollmann asserts the rights of a “rational Scepticism”, whereas Crusius proves the groundlessness of the geometrical method and goes back to the origin of human knowledge in order to locate the first principles of the mind in the nature of the mind itself. Finally, Darjes is the most refined philosopher of the time, and reading his works is a constructive mental exercise.

In order to describe the sphere of Feder’s speculative interests more clearly – which, in the early phase do appear to be quite limited – it may be helpful to mention the observation that concludes the account of the history of philosophy, entitled ‘Praktische Schlussanmerkung’. This concerns the relationship between reason and faith and is meant to question the theory of their incompatibility. There are indeed so many different and mutually contrasting philosophies that it is impossible to formulate a univocal evaluation of the relationship between philosophy and religion. The history of philosophy, however, may be of great help: “It seems to me that the history of philosophers provides a convincing proof of the need for revelation, seen as a rule intended both to correct the desires most effectively and to set boundaries on the arbitrary judgements of a rebellious reason” (p. 47). This form of moderate deism is confirmed by the subsequent polemic against Kant’s moral foundation of religion.

Feder’s interest is primarily directed towards the history of the philosophical sciences; yet, this interest is not apparent through the long and monotonous list of names and schools which constitutes the general history of philosophy, with the exception of a few short allusions, for example at the beginning, when he refers to the so-called antediluvian philosophy: “In the age when men were not yet divided into nations – or, in any case, when this division was unknown to us – philosophical history seeks traces of how men started to abstract general truths from sensible knowledge and how this gave rise to the sciences” (p. 14). This plan of research finds its partial fulfilment in the part of the work devoted to the specific histories. If logic is the “science of the rules of thought” and of their legitimate use, then we cannot trace its origin back to the most ancient peoples or early human beings, even though at that time these rules were implicitly present and unconsciously employed. As attested by Aristotle, Zeno of Elea was the first to identify the laws of logic. Among the Greek philosophers, the major contribution came from Aristotle himself and Epicurus, the former for his treatment of the different ways of performing a demonstration, the latter for having implanted the certainty of our knowledge in sensation. Scholastic logic repeats the Aristotelian *Organon* over and over again, while blurring and muddling it, whereas the moderns have completely rejected this logic; Descartes, for example, even though he did not write a true treatise of logic, “taught by his example a free mode of thinking” (*eine freye Art zu denken*) (p. 78). The author fashionable at the time was Locke, an original genius who investigated nature and the history of human knowledge metaphysically (*metaphysisch*). “His luck is that

the dogmatists like him, and he is preferred by the Sceptics. But many of the former presumably praise him without knowing what can be deduced from his theories; similarly, it is certain that the latter derive from him more than he himself would approve of" (pp. 78–79). As for the more recent period, rather than on Wolff, whose geometrical method has the merit of being well-ordered, Feder's attention focuses on Lambert's *Neues Organon*, which renews the Leibnizian logical calculus, which according to Feder marks a new epoch in the history of logic.

Since metaphysics is the *Grundwissenschaft*, "the science concerned with the most general philosophical truths which serve as fundamental truths in the other parts of philosophy" (p. 80) – and this is the primary meaning of metaphysics, understood in an Aristotelian sense as "first philosophy" or "ontology", which is followed by the various special metaphysics: pneumatology, cosmology, theology – it is possible to outline its course from the general history of the human intellect (*ihre Geschichte aus der allgemeinen Geschichte des menschlichen Verstands entwerfen*). Human knowledge arises from sensations, and by reflecting on these sensations it derives back to general concepts. The constancy of certain relationships within perceptions leads men to formulate judgements not founded on any immediate experience. Thus the concepts of invisible substances were formed, which gradually lost the sensible character they had possessed at the beginning. In accordance with Hume, Feder denies that metaphysics has a metempirical origin and explains the *a priori* progress which is proper to it, with the gradual process of generalization from which every other science is formed and which is ultimately rooted in sensible experience.

Among the philosophical disciplines, metaphysics holds the most critical position. The greatest of all metaphysicians was not a modern philosopher, but Aristotle; and the Scholastics, wishing to imitate him, corrupted him. For a certain period, the rejection of Scholasticism implied contempt for metaphysics itself on the part of humanists and Renaissance scholars. But it soon became clear that a reform of philosophy could not take place without a reform of metaphysics. Descartes moved in this direction, adjusting the method of mathematics to metaphysical discourse. But the negative outcome this method produced with Spinoza greatly reduced confidence in the capacity of the geometrical method to solve the problems of metaphysics. The present situation, warns Feder, is characterized by Scepticism or lack of interest, even though some have rightly tried to define the degree of certainty of the metaphysical principles by studying the nature and purposes of human knowledge (an implicit reference to Locke).

A short history of natural theology, running parallel to the history of metaphysics, is contained in the *Institutiones logicae et metaphysicae*. Feder denies that the early, confused, and erroneous conceptions of the divinity are the work of providence, although he does not go so far as to totally deny the traditional theological vision of history. The feature that characterizes the theology of the primitive peoples is polytheism, which derives from a primitive state of knowledge and the prevalence of imagination and custom over reason. The history of theology put forward by Feder anticipates some themes contained in the *Historia doctrinae de vero Deo* written by his colleague Meiners (cf. below, Sect. 9.2.4). Anaxagoras was the first to speak

of God as purest mind, the author of life and of the world's order; Socrates and Plato followed in the wake of Anaxagoras, whereas Aristotle and the Stoics denied the immortality of the soul, and the Atomists even denied the divinity itself. In the modern age, the reaction to Scholasticism produced Scepticism and atheism. A reform was attempted by Descartes with his geometrical method, which was imitated – although with impious consequences – by Spinoza and, more moderately and convincingly, by Leibniz.

The first philosophical science to establish itself as such was physics. This is attested by our individual experience, which originates from sensations and has the body as its immediate object; history itself confirms that “the natural doctrine was the first theoretical science of the ancient world, from which the other theoretical sciences gradually originated” (p. 221). As soon as men, urged by curiosity and necessity, were able to reflect upon their own sensations, physics emerged. The first Greek philosophers dealt only with this part of philosophy but, in this case too, the greatest among the ancients was Aristotle, who founded natural science partly on metaphysics and partly on observation, thus becoming the first to initiate natural science. During the modern age, the reform of philosophy primarily concerned natural science. After Bacon, who rendered physics independent from metaphysics, great progress was made due to Galileo, Kepler, Copernicus, Brahe, and above all Newton. Thus it is thanks to this science in particular that modern philosophy has become preferable to ancient philosophy.

While outlining the history of practical philosophy too, Feder keeps his eye on the “philosophical history” of man and his path to becoming a civilized being. The primitive instinct to love oneself, from being initially indeterminate, gradually resolved itself into a series of rules and maxims which the intellect then rendered necessary. The rise of moral concepts therefore involves the development of mankind and its gradual distancing from the state of savagery. The mother of moral science is politics, which subordinated ethics to itself, as demonstrated by the completest system of practical philosophy elaborated in Antiquity, which is once again Aristotelian. The history of practical philosophy in the modern age ultimately coincides with the history of natural law, which was first confusedly formulated by Grotius, then completed by Pufendorf, and systematized by Christian Wolff.

**9.1.4.4** In his historical narrative written for teaching purposes, Feder follows the same order of parts and chapters as Brucker's *Institutiones historiae philosophicae* in a schematic way, mostly limiting himself to listing schools and philosophers. At times he mentions doctrines, such as the Atomism of the Eleatic school; even more rarely he expresses judgements on the systems, which are almost always negative, such as the assessment of the Scholastics we have mentioned above or the judgement – again drawn from Brucker – on eclecticism during the Roman age (that is to say on Neoplatonism): “It not only tried to reconcile all philosophers with one another, but also with the Christian religion, and from this further confusion and new errors arose” (p. 27). As we have seen, the presentation of modern philosophy is more elaborate, and here Feder expresses his preferences more clearly and indicates the authors who are closer to his own perspective. The position of the historian emerges through some extemporaneous statements in the ‘Praktische

Schlussanmerkung' cited above, concerning the relationship between reason and faith and in the 'Anmerkung über die griechischen Secten'. Here Feder points out, on the one hand, the contradictory nature of Greek philosophical systems (each of which is linked to its own fundamental idea, subsequently applied to every object of knowledge) and, on the other, the legitimacy and validity of their moral doctrines, which are essentially in agreement. Finally, he provides a rule valid within practical philosophy: "Hence, it is certain that the knowledge needed for the happiness of man does not remain hidden from him" (p. 25).

In his outlines of the specific histories, Feder does not have any particular guide that he follows uncritically, since here he is not concerned with the completeness of the information provided, but he uses the theoretical framework he has previously presented for each discipline. What prevails is a twofold perspective: on the one hand, special emphasis is placed on the origin of each science, on the other, on the interest in these sciences that existed at that time. Searching for the origin of the sciences not only involves reconstructing the stages which marked their progress, but also, and especially, studying the psychological and anthropological process which, by analogy with the evolution of individual life, accompanies the creation and advance of culture. By using Locke's "metaphysics" of the human mind, Feder puts forward a history of the sciences in accordance with the history of human reason, that is, of the progress of knowledge and civilization.

The history of philosophy has a philosophical importance for the contribution it may provide to the progress of philosophy too. Both the 'Einleitung zur philosophischen Historie' and the specific histories end by presenting a view – particularly rich in helpful references – of the 'state' of philosophy and its components in recent times: the history of logic ends with the proposal to compile some *Data* on contemporary logic, which might be used by a historian who intends to continue Walch's *Historia logicae* (see Models, II, pp. 380–385); and the history of metaphysics concludes with an appeal intended to overcome the aporias which had weakened the study of this discipline during the modern age.

**9.1.5** For a long time the polemic against Kant weighed heavily on any assessment of Feder's work; indeed after he resigned from teaching, a Kantian like Buhle had to admit that "he often suffered injustice on the part of partial zealots" (J.G. Buhle, *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, Göttingen, 1804, VI, p. 539). Historians of philosophy, especially those of a neo-Kantian tendency, remained critical and prejudiced against him: K. Vorländer described him as "A mediocre scholar but, as usually happens, just as conceited" (I. Kant, *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik*, ed. by K. Vorländer, Hamburg, 1965, p. XI). He was judged to lack a solid personal philosophical position and therefore to be incapable of understanding critical philosophy (von Selle, *Die Georg-August-Universität*, pp. 176–177). Wundt (p. 291) believed he was representative of the lack of appreciation of philosophy in Göttingen, as is shown by the fact that he was appointed professor on the basis of his *Grundriss der philosophischen Wissenschaften*.

Only in recent times, owing to a relative increase in interest in "popular philosophy", has the figure of Feder as a thinker begun to be studied in a less prejudiced fashion. Together with Meiners, he has been reckoned among the founders of social

psychology, and on a speculative level – together with Herder and Forster – he is considered one of the exponents of late-eighteenth-century German empiricism, a movement which was, however, unable to establish itself, being stifled by the Kantian revolution and the development of idealism, in addition to the fact that it had to suffer the consequences of the French Revolution: “Its chief virtues, moderation and tolerance, could not appear convincing, still less could they surpass all-embracing strategies” (Röttgers, ‘J.G.H. Feder’, p. 438). Some of Feder’s anti-Kantian positions, such as his criticisms of ethics, prove to be much less unfounded and superficial than at first appeared: for example, his opinion that Kant’s concept of ethicality does not concern man in his entirety but merely reason; that this concept allows an opposition, to be verified, between inclinations and reason; and that it acknowledges freedom only by admitting an exception within the order of natural causality.<sup>31</sup>

As a historian of philosophy, Feder is not worthy of any special mention. However, the *Grundriss der philosophischen Wissenschaften* came to be widely used in academic teaching, particularly for the historical sections it contained. This is confirmed by the fact that Kant himself, in the course of his teaching, used Feder’s textbook for ten semesters (from 1767 to 1782) in his lectures on philosophical encyclopaedia.<sup>32</sup> Regarding this, Wundt (p. 306) remarks that the philosophical part must have been thoroughly rewritten by Kant, since Feder only reports names, extrinsic information, and almost nothing about doctrines. More significant is Feder’s influence on his pupils Meiners and Tiedemann, motivating them to apply themselves to the fields of the history of culture and the historiography of philosophy (see Freyer, p. 63); it is precisely through them that the “popular philosophy” taught by Feder in Göttingen brought about a new and decisive orientation in research on the history of philosophy.

**9.1.6 On Feder’s life:** J.S. Pütter, *Versuch einer academischen Gelehrten-Geschichte von der Georg August Universität* (Göttingen and Hanover, 1765–1838; repr. Hildesheim, 2006), II, pp. 164–166; J.G.H. Feder’s *Leben, Natur und Grundsätze. Zur Belehrung und Ermunterung seiner lieben Nachkommen, auch Anderer die Nutzbares daraus aufzunehmen geneigt sind* (Leipzig, Hannover, and Darmstadt, 1825); Meusel, II, pp. 128–131; IX, p. 328; XI, p. 216; XIII, pp. 364–365; Ersch-Gruber, XLII, I, pp. 210–219; Gumposch, pp. 236–237; ADB, VI, pp. 595–597; NDB, V, pp. 41–42; DECGPh, pp. 308–315.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. Röttgers, ‘J.G.H. Feder’, p. 431. In the eighteenth century, an attempt at overcoming the opposition between Feder and Kant over ethics had already been made by J.G.K. Werdermann, who declared both philosophers his masters: ‘Feder und Kant: Versuch zur Aufhellung einiger streitigen Punkte in den Gründen der Moralphilosophie’, BM, XXIII (1794), pp. 309–339. Werdermann himself wrote a *Geschichte der Meinungen über Schicksal und menschliche Freiheit, von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die neuesten Denker* (Leipzig, 1793).

<sup>32</sup>See the announcement of the course which was to be held during the winter semester 1767–1768: “M. Imm. Kant . . . h. III-IV Encyclopaediam philosophiae universae cum succincta historia philosophica secundum compendium Feders *Grundriss der philosophischen Wissenschaften* uno semestri pertractandum proposuit”; cf. G. Micheli, *Kant storico della filosofia* (Padua, 1980), p. 87.

On his thought, in addition to general essays concerning the phenomenon of ‘popular philosophy’: E. Pachaly, *Feders Erkenntnistheorie und Metaphysik*, Diss. (Erlangen, 1906); W. Stietz, *J.G.H. Feder als Gegner Kants*, Diss. (Rostock, 1924); G. von Selle, *Die Georg-August-Universität zu Göttingen (1737–1937)* (Göttingen, 1937), pp. 176–177; Wundt, pp. 306–307; K. Lewin, *Die Entwicklung der Sozialwissenschaften in Göttingen im Zeitalter der Aufklärung (1734–1812)* (Göttingen, 1971), pp. 73–86, 293–301; Marino, pp. 161–181; Zimmerli, ‘Schwere Rüstung des Dogmatismus’, pp. 58–71; K. Röttgers, ‘J.G. Feder. Beitrag zu einer Verhinderungsgeschichte eines deutschen Empirismus’, *Kant-Studien*, LXXV (1984), pp. 420–441; Kuehn, *Scottish Common Sense in Germany*, pp. 43–46, 74–85, and 214–220; R. Brandt, ‘Feder und Kant’, *Kant-Studien*, LXXX (1989), pp. 249–264; Rachold, *Die aufklärische Vernunft*, pp. 199–208 and 213–216; J. Ferrari, ‘La recension Garve-Feder de la *Critique de la raison pure*’, in *Années 1781–1801*, pp. 127–134; C. Piché, ‘Feder et Kant en 1787. Le § 27 de la déduction transcendentale’, in *Années 1781–1801*, pp. 67–76; *Kant’s Early Critics*, pp. 1–3, 16–7, 27–8, and 139–54.

Mention of his historiographical production, with particular reference to the use made by Kant: ADBibl., IX/1 (1769), pp. 76–80, XI/1 (1770), pp. 22–29, 275–280; Ernesti, p. 102; E. Feldmann, ‘Die Geschichte der Philosophie in Kants Vorlesungen’, *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, XLIX (1936), p. 170; G. Micheli, *Kant storico della filosofia* (Padua, 1980), pp. 87 and 146; Schneider, pp. 33 and 143.

## 9.2 Christoph Meiners (1747–1810)

### *Historia doctrinae de vero Deo*

### *Geschichte der Wissenschaften*

### *Grundriss der Geschichte der Weltweisheit*

**9.2.1** Christoph Meiners was born on 31st July, 1747, in Warstade, in the area of Hanover. He studied at the gymnasium of Bremen and at the University of Göttingen, but was largely self taught; in his younger years, he keenly read a number of diverse authors, from Rabelais to La Mettrie and Rousseau. He initially gained academic distinction due to the answer he wrote in response to a question proposed for debate by the Academy of Sciences in Berlin: *Ueber die menschlichen Neigungen* (1769); his answer, entitled *Revision der Philosophie* (1772), earned him the position of professor of philosophy at the University of Göttingen, where he remained until the end of his life (he died on 1st May, 1810). In Göttingen he was a pupil and friend of Feder, with whom he collaborated in publishing the anti-Kantian review *Philosophische Bibliothek*; he worked with the historians August Ludwig Schloezer, Gottfried Achenwall, and Ludwig Timotheus Spittler; from 1776 he was one of the most committed members of the Academy of Sciences in Göttingen. He alternated his long and intense teaching activity with several trips through the German states and abroad, notably in Switzerland and Russia. He was invited to

Russia by Tsar Alexander I, who set him the task of reorganizing advanced studies and planning the establishment of new universities.

The overall direction taken by his research was intended to demonstrate – through the study of history – the close relationship between culture and scientific progress, and individual happiness and the prosperity of states. But the influence exerted by his work, which had popularizing rather than scientific aims, was not always equal to his expectations, as Heyne remarked in the funeral oration given in his honour (see C.G. Heyne, *Memoria Chr. Meiners*, in *Comm. Societatis Regiae Scientiarum Gott. recent.*, I, *ad an. 1808–1811*, Göttingen, 1811, p. 14:). His ideas concerning the diversity of the human races were exploited in the London Parliament by the supporters of the slave trade, while, at the very beginning of the nineteenth century, his detailed description of the rules and behaviour adopted by the Pythagorean community provided a model for German secret and patriotic societies. From a philosophical viewpoint, Meiners was close to Garve, Feder, and the other exponents of ‘popular philosophy’, derisively termed *Wassersuppenphilosophie* (the term derives from Georg Christoph Lichtenberg and is cited by von Selle, *Die Georg-August-Universität*, p. 177). His eclecticism is not of a systematic character, and has above all polemic intentions, initially against Wolff and then against Kant. He had an immense capacity for reading, although this was often disorderly and superficial: he had an almost complete knowledge of ancient literature, notably Greek, and a large knowledge of modern Anglo-French literature.

**9.2.2** Within Meiners’ vast literary production, the strictly philosophical works occupy only a limited amount of space and range from the pamphlet *Revision der Philosophie* (Göttingen, 1772), to various university textbooks: *Kurzer Abriss der Psychologie zum Gebrauche seiner Vorlesungen* (Göttingen and Gotha, 1773); *Grundriss der Seelen-Lehre* (Lemgo, 1786); *Grundriss der Theorie und Geschichte der schönen Wissenschaften* (Lemgo, 1787); *Grundriss der Ethik, oder Lebens-Wissenschaft* (Hannover, 1801). The first work mentioned contains significant criticism of Leibniz and Wolff, while the other works, owing to the diffusion of critical philosophy, are aimed against Kant, who is accused of having revived the doubts and sophisms of the ancient philosophical schools. In the ‘Vorrede’ to the *Grundriss der Seelen-Lehre*, among other things, Meiners establishes a comparison between Kant and Hume, totally in favour of the latter. Psychology is considered to have been, from the very beginning, the science to which every philosophical research is subordinated. This is also confirmed by one of Meiners’ last works, written in a period when his dominant interests were of an anthropological and ethnographic character: *Untersuchungen über die Denkkräfte und Willenskräfte des Menschen, nach Anleitung der Erfahrung* (Göttingen, 1806). In order to see his method of research, it is interesting to look at the position he took against Cabanis concerning the dependence of the moral and spiritual powers on the physical faculties: “In all research on man, it seems to me that, for greater caution, we should leave the question of the nature of the soul open and limit ourselves to viewing, examining, and comparing phenomena with precision, and draw conclusions from them” (*Untersuchungen über die Denkkräfte*, ‘Vorrede’).



However, the result of proceeding *a posteriori* is extreme indecision with regard to the fundamental questions of psychology. In the aforementioned 'Vorrede', Meiners therefore admits, with Cabanis, "that the spiritual and moral constituents of man are dependent upon the physical element much more than is commonly believed and more than the latest spiritualizing German philosophers are willing to acknowledge"; but he does not accept that "the sentient, thinking, willing, and agent self consists in the mere power of the brain", and even less that "the sensible power is the only fundamental power of the thinking and willing man".

The research studies that are more conducive to Meiners are collected in a miscellaneous work, *Vermischte philosophische Schriften* (Leipzig, 1775–1776, 3 vols): contributions on the history of religions and philosophy and anthropology. Particularly important is the first essay, which anticipates the subject of his major historiographical work: *Betrachtungen über die Griechen, das Zeitalter des Plato, über den Timäus dieses Philosophen und dessen Hypothese von der Weltseele* (I, pp. 1–61). According to Meiners, and to the German classicists of his time, the Greeks represent a model of civilization not only because they disseminated the arts and the sciences throughout the ancient world, but also because they were the only people to develop, fully independently of other peoples, their own original concept of humanity.

In the field of the history of religions, Meiners attempts to repudiate the idea of a perfect primitive religion, which was corrupted and degenerated to become the religions of the Eastern peoples, and, on the contrary, seeks to prove the existence of a parallel between the path of culture and the perfecting of religious beliefs: *Versuch über die Religionsgeschichte der ältesten Völker, besonders der Egyptier* (Göttingen, 1775); *Grundriss der Geschichte aller Religionen* (Lemgo, 1785); *Allgemeine kritische Geschichte der Religionen* (Hannover, 1806–1807, 2 vols), as well as several articles, published in the proceedings of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences, again concerning the Egyptian and Persian religions and Zoroaster. The unity of the history of religions and the history of humanity (which Meiners also brought about on an academic plane by teaching these two disciplines during two consecutive semesters) is justified by the link between culture, true religion, virtue, and happiness, which Meiners believes he has documented historically, as he declares in the 'Vorrede' to his *Grundriss der Geschichte aller Religionen*: "Each section of this booklet, and even more of the *Grundriss der Geschichte der Menschheit*, will demonstrate, I hope, with undisputable facts that barbarism exerts an inevitable action – and the *Aufklärung* an equally necessary beneficial action – on true religion and virtue, hence also on public and private happiness". In order to confirm this connection, Meiners frequently turns to experiences derived from educational psychology: "As long as peoples lie in their infancy, they can certainly worship one national divinity but they cannot recognize one true God. This requires a degree of culture and an amount of knowledge that the savages and barbarians are unable to possess, just as children are. This inability to recognize the true God before possessing a certain degree of culture is proved not only by the professions of faith made by the savages and barbarians – as well as by the history of the Greeks and of all great ancient peoples – but also by what we ourselves experience in our childhood

and by what some exceptional men have told about themselves" (*Grundriss der Geschichte aller Religionen*, pp. 5–6). With respect to the interpretation of primitive religion as idolatry, Meiners' theory partially accords with Hume's writings on this subject (which were well-known in Germany, where a German translation of the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* was published in 1781, only 2 years after the English edition), but it departs from them when he persists in ascribing the origin and foundation of theism to the *Aufklärung*.

Meiners' research into the history of philosophy was initially related to his interest in the history of religions, as in the *Historia doctrinae de vero Deo, omnium rerum auctore atque rectore* (Lemgo: Impensis Heredum Meyeri, 1780), in which the history of natural theology unfolds in connection with the history of philosophy. This work may be considered as a prelude to the most extensive work in Meiners' historiographical production, whose subject matter is the relationship between the history of the sciences and the history of Graeco-Roman civilization: *Geschichte des Ursprungs, Fortgangs und Verfalls der Wissenschaften in Griechenland und Rom* (Lemgo: im Verlage der Meyerischen Buchhandlung, 1781–1782), 2 vols; the work stopped at book VIII, which deals with Plato. The circulation of this text in Europe is demonstrated by the publication of an unabridged French translation (*Histoire de l'origine, des progrès et de la décadence des sciences dans la Grèce*, ed. J. Ch. Laveaux, Paris, an VII [1799], 4 vols), and an Italian translation, though limited to the first volume of the preceding one (Venice, 1803).

Between 1770 and 1780, Meiners' interest focused chiefly on the history of philosophy, as is shown by a number of articles published in the proceedings of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and by two other monographic works devoted to the Stoics and Neoplatonists: *Commentarius quo Stoicorum sententias de animarum post mortem statu et fatis illustrat* [...] Ch. Meiners (Göttingen, 1775); *Beytrag zur Geschichte der Denkart der ersten Jahrhunderte nach Christi Geburt, in einigen Betrachtungen über die neu-platonische Philosophie* (Leipzig, 1782). A concise but comprehensive survey of the entire history of philosophy is contained in the *Grundriss der Geschichte der Weltweisheit* (Lemgo: im Verlage der Meyerschen Buchhandlung, 1786), as well as in a general history of ethics: *Allgemeine kritische Geschichte der ältern und neuern Ethik oder Lebens-Wissenschaft, nebst einer Untersuchung der Fragen: gibt es dann auch wirklich eine Wissenschaft des Lebens? Wie sollte ihr Inhalt, wie ihre Methode beschaffen seyn?* (Göttingen, 1800–1801).

Meiners' works on the history of philosophy are continued and developed in his writings on the history of political and civil institutions, customs and civilization: *Geschichte des Luxus der Athenienser, von der ältesten Zeiten an bis auf den Tod Philipps von Macedonien* (Cassel, 1781; French transl.: Paris, 1823); *Geschichte des Verfalls der Sitten und der Staatsverfassung der Römer* (Leipzig, 1782), which appeared again later as an introduction to the German translation of Gibbon's work: *Geschichte des Verfalls der Sitten, der Wissenschaften und Sprache der Römer in den ersten Jahrhunderten nach Christi Geburt. Als Einleitung zu Gibbons Geschichte der Abnahme und des Falls des römischen Reiches* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1791; French transl.: Paris, an III; Italian transl.: Venice, 1798; Florence, 1817 [transl. directly from German]; English transl.: London, 1808); *Historische*

*Vergleichung der Sitten und Verfassungen, der Gesetze und Gewerbe des Handels und der Religion, der Wissenschaften und Lehranstalten des Mittelalters mit denen unsers Jahrhunderts* (Hannover, 1793), 3 vols.

The final part of this work was also published separately under the title *Ueber wahre, unzeitige und falsche Aufklärung und deren Wirkungen* (Hannover, 1793). This short text is of interest in explaining not only Meiners' political position in the years after the French Revolution, but also the sense and limits he attributed to the action of intellectuals in disseminating the *Aufklärung*. 'Enlightenment' in a broader sense designates the possession of "fair and useful knowledge by which the human mind takes shape and the heart of man ennobles itself" (*Ueber wahre*, p. 2). Yet, Meiners immediately makes it clear that not all useful knowledge is favourable to the Enlightenment, but only that which helps to remove "superstition, fanaticism, and atheism". He perceives the essence of the *Aufklärung* as consisting of a well-balanced ideological position of a mainly theological but also of a political nature: "True *Aufklärung* consists in a knowledge of nature and its author, man and his conditions, a knowledge which can safeguard and deliver those possessing it from superstition and fanaticism (*gegen Aberglauben und Schwärmerey*), unbelief (*Unglauben*), despotism as well as anarchy and dissoluteness, and can instruct them in their true destiny and happiness, duties and rights" (pp. 5–6). He clearly manifests his disappointment at the outcome of the French Revolution, which had induced hope of a victory of the *Aufklärung* in Europe but, by its excesses, disseminated hatred for concepts such as freedom, culture, and tolerance. Meiners does not fail to reassure his contemporaries by pointing out the difference between the socio-cultural situation in pre-revolutionary France and that in England and Germany, where "the upper classes are more cultivated and less dissolute and the lower classes less ignorant and miserable" (p. 63). In any case, the *Aufklärung* does not lead to revolution: it refuses to resort to violence, and prefers reform and a gradual evolution of ideas and social and political institutions.

Meiners' most disputed works – involving a polemic with Joh. Friedrich Blumenbach and Joh. Georg Adam Forster – are those which originate in his historical and anthropological research and deal with the question of the origin and classification of the human races. He granted the Celtic race superiority over the Slavs, both belonging to the Tartarian-Caucasian stock, which in turn is superior to the Mongolian stock; at the top of the scale are the peoples of northern Europe; on the lowest grade the Blacks, who are hardly better than animals. Anthropology seems to be Meiners' primary sphere of interest during the last phase of his production, as is attested by dozens of articles published in the review *Göttingisches historisches Magazin* as well as by the following works: *Geschichte des weiblichen Geschlechts* (Hannover, 1788–1800), 4 vols; *Geschichte der Ungleichheit der Stände unter den vornehmsten Europäischen Völkern* (Hannover, 1792); *Grundriss der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Lemgo, 1793); *Betrachtungen über die Fruchtbarkeit oder Unfruchtbarkeit, über den vormahligen und gegenwärtigen Zustand der vornehmsten Länder in Asien* (Lübeck and Leipzig, 1795–1796); *Historische Gemälde der Lage und des Zustandes des weiblichen Geschlechts unter allen Völkern der Erde* (Leipzig, 1803); *Untersuchungen über die Verschiedenheiten der Menschennaturen in Asien und den Südländern, in den Ostindischen und*

*Südseeinseln, nebst einer historischen Vergleichung der vormahligen und gegenwärtigen Bewohner dieser Continente und Eylande* (Tübingen, 1811–1815), 3 vols; *Vergleichung des ältern und neuern Russlander, in Rücksicht auf die natürlichen Beschaffenheiten der Einwohner, ihrer Cultur, Sitten, Lebensart und Gebräuche, so wie auf die Verfassung und Verwaltung des Reichs* (Leipzig, 1798), 2 vols.

Another field on which Meiners concentrated at length is the history of scholastic institutions and teaching methods: *Anweisungen für Jünglinge zum eigenen Arbeiten, besonders zum Lesen, Excerptiren und Schreiben* (Hannover, 1789). Two well-known volumes are: *Ueber die Verfassung und Verwaltung deutscher Universitäten* (Göttingen, 1801–1802), as well as *Geschichte der Entstehung und Entwicklung der hohen Schulen unsers Erdtheils* (1802–1805), 4 vols; *Kurze Darstellung der hohen Schulen des protestantischen Deutschlands, besonders der hohen Schulen zu Göttingen* (Göttingen, 1808). In addition to these works, let us mention an extensive biographical survey of the illustrious men who lived after the Renaissance: *Lebensbeschreibungen berühmter Männer aus den Zeiten der Wiederherstellung der Wissenschaften*, (Zürich, 1795–1797), 3 vols.

It is finally worth mentioning the accounts of his travels, in particular: *Briefe über die Schweiz* (Berlin, 1784–1790), 2 vols; *Kleinere Länder- und Reisebeschreibungen* (Berlin, 1791–1801), 3 vols; *Beschreibung einer Reise nach Stuttgart und Strasburg im Herbst 1801, nebst einer kurzen Geschichte der Stadt Strasburg während der Schreckenszeit* (Göttingen, 1803).

**9.2.3** Meiners never attempted to assemble a complete and systematic theory of the history of philosophy. Besides a brief note at the beginning of the textbook, it is especially in the ‘Vorrede’ to the *Geschichte des Ursprungs, Fortgangs und Verfalls der Wissenschaften in Griechenland und Rom* that the question of the nature of the history of philosophy, its methods, its relationship with the other disciplines, and the framework of the historical work provides him with the opportunity for reflection. Like Heumann and Brucker, Meiners is concerned to define the proper object of the history of philosophy in order to outline its range and tasks. Indeed, the history of philosophy represents only a small part of the history of the human mind (*nur einen kleinen Theil der Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes*): it borders on the history of many other sciences, such as natural history, the history of mathematics, law, and religion; it must be clearly separated from these, however, so as not to cover a vast but inappropriate amount of ground (*Grundriss der Geschichte der Weltweisheit*, p. 1). During certain historical ages, however, some of these sciences fall within the broader notion of ‘philosophy’, and indeed, at its origin, philosophy occupied the entire field of the sciences.

It is therefore impossible to put forward a preliminary definition of philosophy and the history of philosophy: they will have different meanings and scope within different cultural and historical contexts. Hence, Meiners describes his history of Greek philosophy as a “history of the sciences”, and in the ‘Vorrede’ he better clarifies the meaning and scope of this expression: “In order to prevent the reader from seeking in my work anything more than I could or would concede, I have immediately to declare that I have written a history of philosophy only within the extent accorded to it by the Greeks (*in dem Umfange, welchen die Griechen ihr*

*gaben*), and a history of eloquence and historical knowledge among the Greeks and Romans from the origin of these sciences until their decline. Almost no Greek philosopher included natural history, medicine, and the different parts of mathematics under the name of philosophy, hence I will deal with the state and changes of these sciences only up to the time when they were linked to philosophy and constituted one, still undivided body of knowledge. But after the period in which they started to become separate from philosophy and support themselves autonomously, I will let that the account of their progress be told by someone more cultured in these fields than I am" (*Geschichte*, I, 'Vorrede', p. XXIII).

Meiners' historiographical activity is dominated by his interest in research of an interdisciplinary nature, connecting the history of philosophy with the other historical disciplines. The very subject matter of his major work, the *Geschichte der Wissenschaften*, concerns the relationship between the history of philosophy and political history: "What influence did, and still does, the political constitution exert on the sciences, and vice versa?" (I, p. v). An answer to this question could have been provided either by an inquiry of a general kind or by choosing a significant historical period allowing a more thorough and detailed evaluation of the conditions characterizing the relationship between culture and politics. Meiners adopts the second working hypothesis and justifies it with the exemplary nature of the Greek civilization in the compass of human history. Meiners' choice is in accordance with the German cultural climate of the later eighteenth century which – with Winckelmann – viewed Greek man as the highest model of humanity which found historical fulfilment, and – with Herder (see above, *Intro.*, c) – believed it possible to identify in the Greek world the laws governing the development of a civilization in their most natural and scientific formulation.

The fact that Meiners' work stopped with the Greeks, or rather with Plato, may be explained by the following positive bias towards the civilization of classical Greece, as the author explicitly declares in the 'Vorrede': "Although I will often be prevented from entirely satisfying the curiosity of my readers and will leave unexplained both the causes and the effects of some remarkable fact, nevertheless I am persuaded that the history of the sciences among the Greeks, however imperfectly and incompletely we can describe them today, is more instructive (*lehrreicher*) and deserves greater attention than the history of the sciences among any other people. The Greeks are not only the nation from which, during the following centuries, the enlightenment spread throughout the other parts of the earth, but also the only nation which owes everything to itself (*alles nur sich selbst*) and nothing to any other cultivated people, the only nation in which it is possible to observe the human mind, left to itself, through all stages and in all ages, from its first manifestation until its final weakness and decline. All the other peoples of the earth, whether they reached or surpassed the Greeks or remained behind them, always had other peoples as their masters; hence, their knowledge is not a property they acquired by themselves, but is a more or less extraneous good that they drew from others or that others brought to them. Only among the Greeks it is possible to grasp the order according to which the human mind, devoid of all outer help, moves from the arts to the sciences, and from one science, one enquiry, or one opinion to another" (I, pp. XXII–XXIII).

It would seem that, for Meiners, a 'pure' history of philosophy, in the sense of a history containing merely ideas, doctrines, and theories, is unacceptable. To study the birth, progress, and decline of the sciences means primarily to relate the sciences themselves to the geographical, political, and economic frame of reference within which they are placed. A historian of philosophy is "pragmatic" (see above, Introd., c) when he is capable of recognizing and evaluating the factors which determine scientific progress, and ordering events according to a sequence of cause and effect. Direct, primary causes (*die nächsten Ursachen*) are the geographical and environmental conditions, but also the political, economic, and religious institutions. In addition to these inner or standing factors (*innere oder beständige Ursachen*), there are those accidental (*zufällige*) factors or causes which explain the anomalies that are so frequent throughout the history of the human mind and account for the differences in the development of the sciences among peoples in similar geographical, political, and economic situations (see *Geschichte*, I, 'Vorrede', pp. VIII-IX). Formulating a historical explanation implies weaving together these two orders of causes: the former, of a general character, must be integrated with the discovery of the particular conditions which determine each historical situation.

But the connection between the historical conditions and the development of the sciences is not always directly perceptible: the history of the human mind is not subject to mechanical laws or automatisms. As Voltaire remarked, for example, the Crusades caused death and destruction, but also gave rise to that process of the revival of the sciences which, in the sixteenth century, fostered by additional factors such as the invention of printing and the geographical discoveries, brought about the Renaissance. A historian must reconstruct events using the greatest possible number of causes, since they integrate with one another, and only as a whole can they show their effect: "If we individually consider each of the causes whose combined effects set back into motion the stalled engine of the human mind and re-charged its springs again, then each of them appears to be so important, by reason of its consequences, that we tend to think we have found the thread that can lead us, from beginning to end, through the labyrinth of interlacing paths and difficulties. But if we try to separate or pick out the effects of each of these causes from all the others, we are soon embroiled in such confusion that it becomes impossible to distinguish either the beginning or the centre or the end of the elements that are already inextricably interwoven. Each cause, however important it appears to us if we consider it separately, when compared with the other effects, becomes nothing but a drop of water disappearing into a powerful vortex or into a huge waterspout dragging everything with it with irrestrainable violence" (I, p. XIV).

Historical work often seems inadequate compared with the richness and originality that characterise the development of history. This recognition does not lead to Scepticism, but rather makes the historian fully aware of the possibilities of gaining greater insight into the causes and, at the same time, makes him attentive to everything new and unexpected that history may show. In the conclusions to the first two volumes of his history of the sciences, Meiners even overturns the premises which had constituted his starting point. After stating the close connection between civil and political progress on the one hand, and the advancement of the sciences on the other, he points out – thus echoing Rousseau – that the conspicuous development

of the arts, sciences, and philosophy which took place in Greece between the time of Anaxagoras and Plato was paralleled by a deterioration of the behaviour, political institutions, and the strength of Greece: "If we now want to weigh up the advantages the Greeks derived from the sciences against the loss of virtue and happiness, we shall have to admit that towards the LXXX Olympiad they were incomparably happier and stronger than towards the CX, and that among all the peoples of Greece the weakness and corruption of moral behaviour greatly surpassed the perfection of the arts and the sciences" (II, p. 792).

The conditions which make it possible to formulate such a structured historical explanation are, on the one hand, a discerning and philologically based methodology, and, on the other, freedom of judgement, that is, a mind free from all kinds of predilection or grievance. We have to ask ourselves beforehand "whether we do not secretly wish to attain one particular result instead of another" (I, p. XXXIII) and let ourselves be guided by the events and facts themselves rather than by our personal preferences or aversions: "Without any hesitation I can assert that I did everything in my power never to be either an immoderate panegyrist or a denigrator, to let myself always be guided by the facts, not to let myself be deceived by the merits when confronted with the faults, and vice versa, and finally to remain in a middle position or maintain a balance between two opposing statements until I could examine the reasons and objections of both sides" (I, p. XXXIV).

This impartiality is not only the result of practice and mental effort but is also due to a lack of previous, unshakable ideas in the author's mind, who professes, instead, a moderate Scepticism: "I have found it so much less difficult to exercise this virtue in the present essay because my attachment to my opinions – except those that concern my own happiness and that of my fellow creatures – has been such for several years that I can dismiss them without any pain or nostalgia. And I do not wish to wage any war, nor do I feel any hardly endurable reluctance or inner fierce rebellion when I meet with facts that destroy the opinions I have judged to be true for several years" (I, p. XXXV).

As previously said, in his history of philosophy, Meiners avoids putting forward any definition of philosophy; besides having a historical justification, this precaution aims at guaranteeing the impartiality and objectivity of judgement and was to constitute a characteristic feature of the historiographical perspective adopted by the Göttingen school (cf. Tiedemann) as well as a polemical theme raised against the historiographical tendency of Kantian inspiration. But the rejection of a well-defined philosophical concept sustaining historical research does not mean an absence of speculative interest or theoretical concern. Rather, all of Meiners' historical works arise from a context of theoretical analysis and debate, as we have previously seen with reference to the *Geschichte der Wissenschaften*, and as appears more clearly from the *Historia doctrinae de vero Deo*, in which the history of natural theology is intended to answer the fundamental question underlying all rational theology, namely, whether man is capable by his powers alone of attaining the knowledge of God's uniqueness and of his creative and provident work.

On this question, two opposed positions can be considered: on the one hand, that of the exponents of the Enlightenment, supporters of the possibility of a rational religion, built by rational forces alone and autonomous with respect to revealed religion,

those for whom “there is no people that is so barbarous, rough, and savage as not to show more or less evident or obscure traces of some opinion concerning the only supreme God” (*Historia*, pp. 10–11); and on the other hand, that of the theologians – who are concerned to preserve the necessity of revelation and therefore the value of the Christian religion – who believe “that there never existed any people or any man who, guided by reason alone, could rise up to the notion of one single mind excellent to the utmost degree”. Clearly, in this case, reference to history assists each of the two theoretical positions, which reveal all their abstractness when viewed on the basis of a historical analysis carried out without any bias.

Indeed, the notion of one single God, creative and provident, appeared very late and was certainly linked to several other doctrines which almost constitute its precondition. Apart from the Hebrews and the Christians, who received it by means of revelation, it was only among the Greeks that, after an appropriate development of the sciences, the rational idea of divinity became manifest: “Aside from these outstanding nations, no other nation made as much progress with reference to observation and interpretation, or clearly recognized the infinite totality of things, the immensity of the celestial bodies, the incredible rapidity and eternal invariability of their motion, and, moreover, the changeable events of the times and the different forms of usefulness and capability shown by all races and living beings, so much so that it came to the conclusion that this sum of things, consistently linked to one another, could not be produced and assembled by chance or fate, and not even by necessity or by the artifice of different architects, but only by the power and will of one most excellent mind” (*Historia*, p. 17). The history of natural theology is thus conducted on the same ground as the history of philosophy, since the ideas concerning the divinity are the expression of the degree of cultural and scientific development of each civilization. This confirms that discovering the relationship between political institutions and the degree of advancement attained by the sciences, and explaining the latter by bringing in reasons and factors of a historical kind represent the chief interest and primary perspective adopted by Meiners as a historian of philosophy.

#### **9.2.4.1 *Historia doctrinae de vero Deo* *Geschichte des Ursprungs, Fortgangs und Verfalls der* *Wissenschaften in Griechenland und Rom* *Grundriss der Geschichte der Weltweisheit***

The *Historia doctrinae de vero Deo* consists of two parts which analyse the ideas concerning the divinity that are peculiar to Eastern thought and to the Ancient Greeks, and the theological ideas peculiar to philosophers. The crucial moment is therefore represented by the birth of philosophy thanks to the Ionians. The first part, “which sets out the opinions held by the ancient peoples and their priests concerning



the divine nature” (pp. 9–238) is divided into six sections, each corresponding to a particular people: the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Chaldeans, Indians, Chinese, and Ancient Greeks (Homer, Hesiod, Orpheus). The second part, “which illustrates the opinions held by the Greek philosophers concerning the origin of things and the divine nature” (pp. 240–548), is devoted to the Greek philosophers and is made up of nine sections corresponding to the Ionians, Pythagoreans, Eleatics, Heraclitus and Empedocles, Anaxagoras and Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and Epicurus. Worth mentioning are the ‘Praefatio’ (pp. 1–8), that deals with questions concerning the method, and the first part of the first section (pp. 9–23), in which Meiners describes the features of the problem that historical research is called on to solve: “We ask: whether it is possible to demonstrate by means of the power of reason alone that there are no longer gods but only one God; and whether there ever existed peoples or wise men who attained knowledge of this truth without the help of the divine revelation which was imparted to them”.

The *Geschichte des Ursprungs, Fortgangs und Verfalls der Wissenschaften in Griechenland und Rom* consists of two volumes, devoted respectively to Johann Georg Heinrich Feder and Johann Stephan Pütter, who were both Meiners’ colleagues at the University of Göttingen. The first five books are contained in the first volume: 1. ‘Ueber den ältesten Zustand von Griechenland, und das Zeitalter der sieben Weisen’, pp. 1–138; 2. ‘Von der jonischen Philosophie, oder Geschichte der ersten wissenschaftlichen Kenntnisse der Griechen’, pp. 139–177; 3. ‘Geschichte der pythagoreischen Gesellschaft, und ihrer Verdienste um die Wissenschaften’, pp. 178–602; 4. ‘Xenophanes, Parmenides, Leukipp und Heraklit’, pp. 603–630; 5. ‘Geschichte der griechischen Weltweisheit zwischen der siebenzigsten und achtzigsten Olympiade’, pp. 631–752. The last three books constitute the second volume: 6. ‘Geschichte der griechischen Sophisten’, pp. 1–227; books 7 and 8 have no title and deal respectively with Socrates and Plato, pp. 228–540 and 541–808. Certain books are divided into chapters, the first of which examines the political situation and the second the history of thought. Book 3, dealing with Pythagoras, is the most extensive (424 pages) and most structured book since it is divided into four chapters: the first is on the sources, the second on the history of Pythagoras and the ancient Pythagoreans, the third on the rules and the organization of Pythagorean society, and the fourth on Pythagoras’ philosophy. Let us mention the two significant ‘Vorrede’, which are made up of 46 and 32 pages respectively and especially that which precedes the first volume, in which the author lays down the rules and the tasks of a historical work. The two volumes have no indexes and contain, at the end of each chapter, several additions.

The *Grundriss der Geschichte der Weltweisheit* is divided into three *Hauptperioden* that are preceded by the ‘Vorrede’ and an ‘Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie’ (pp. 1–5). The first period (pp. 6–148) consists of 15 sections, the first of which is devoted to the barbarian peoples (pp. 6–24) and the following to the philosophers of Greece, arranged chronologically: the seven wise men (pp. 24–26), the Ionians of more ancient times (pp. 27–31), the Pythagoreans (pp. 32–42), the Eleatics and their contemporaries (pp. 43–63), the ancient Sophists (pp. 63–67),

Socrates (pp. 67–77), the Socratic schools (pp. 77–82), Plato (pp. 83–91), the ancient Academy (pp. 91–95), Aristotle (pp. 95–108), the Stoics (pp. 109–130), the Epicureans (pp. 130–139), the Sceptics (pp. 139–142), and the new Academy (pp. 142–148). The second period (pp. 149–215) is divided into four sections, devoted respectively to Roman thought up to the second century after Christ (pp. 149–170), Neoplatonism (pp. 171–186), the *Aufklärung* among Hebrews and Arabs (pp. 187–200), and medieval philosophy in the West (pp. 200–215). The third period consists of two parts: the first (pp. 216–258) presents philosophical thought from the middle of the fifteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth, and the second (pp. 259–302) deals with the most recent century, from Descartes to Berkeley.

**9.2.4.2** Meiners divides the history of philosophy into three periods (*Grundriss*, pp. 2–3). The first comprises the thought of the barbarian peoples and, furthermore, the thought of the Greeks up to the Roman conquest; the second period extends from the formation of the Roman Empire to the middle of the sixteenth century; the third from the Renaissance to the present age. Of greater interest than this general division, which follows a framework customary in the historiography of philosophy, are the subdivisions within the three periods. Both in the textbook and in the history of the sciences and natural theology, Meiners follows a rigorously chronological progression, in accordance with the link established between the history of philosophy and the history of civilization: “As for ancient history, I definitely departed from the customary but absurd sequence of systems and philosophers once chosen by Diogenes [Laertius] and preserved by Brucker and others. Hence, I do not make Pythagoras follow the largest part of later philosophers; moreover, I separate Anaxagoras from the most ancient Ionians, and the new Academy from the ancient one. Only by rigorous observance of the chronological order is it possible to grasp correctly the development of the systems from one another, or their degeneration” (*Grundriss*, ‘Vorrede’). The only exception concerns Eastern and barbarian thought, perhaps because it does not show any real progress but is stuck at its ‘infantile’ stage; it is therefore placed in the margin of the treatment and is still viewed according to the traditional subdivision of peoples: first the Middle-Eastern peoples (Chaldeans, Phoenicians), then the African peoples (Egyptians, Ethiopians), then the Asian peoples (Persians, Indians, and the Chinese), and finally the northern European peoples (Celts).

The succession of Greek thought reflects the chronological line: first of all the seven wise men, then the ancient Ionians (the school of Miletus), the Pythagoreans, the Eleatics and their contemporaries (Heraclitus, Leucippus, Anaxagoras, Empedocles), the Sophists, Socrates, Socrates’s disciples, Plato and the ancient Academy, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the Sceptics and the new Academy. There are no gaps between the philosophical trends nor are they linked through direct filiation, but follow a slow progression within the context of knowledge which surrounds the diverse and composite unfolding of political and social history.

The periodization into which the other periods are structured appears to be less original. Brucker had subdivided ‘middle’ philosophy on the basis of the four predominant religions: paganism, Judaism, Islam, and the Christian religion. Meiners follows him, except that he groups Arabs and Hebrews in one section.

From the *Historia critica* he also derives the internal succession of schools, with only two exceptions: the absence of an “Oriental or Egyptian sect”, which is now termed “a historical phantom” (*Grundriss*, p. 170), and the autonomy accorded to the Neoplatonic school with respect to the other pagan sects. In structuring Scholastic philosophy, Meiners turns again to chronological succession and proceeds by centuries, believing that the traditional tripartition used in philosophical and ecclesiastical historiography is “inappropriate and useless” (pp. 206–207; see *Models*, I, pp. 55–59 and 400–403).

The third period is divided into two parts. The first embraces two centuries and extends to the middle of the seventeenth century. At the beginning Meiners follows Brucker’s framework: the four sections deal with humanistic culture, the opponents of Scholasticism and the controversy between Platonists and Aristotelians, the restorers of the ancient schools, and finally the original thinkers (Pomponazzi, Machiavelli, Telesio, Bacon, Campanella, Grotius, Hobbes, and Gassendi). Finally he presents the great philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whom Meiners considers to be his contemporaries. It is significant that this section, which should start from the middle of the seventeenth century, opens with the history of Descartes and his philosophy; then followed by Malebranche, Spinoza, Bayle, Locke, Shaftesbury, La Rochefoucauld, Leibniz, Pufendorf, Ch. Thomasius, Wolff, and Berkeley.

**9.2.4.3** Meiners dealt at length with ‘Barbarian’ thought in his works on the history of the ancient Eastern religions. The first part of the *Historia doctrinae de vero Deo* is devoted entirely to the theological ideas developed by the ancient peoples, among whom, however, there are no philosophers, strictly speaking, but only priests. The religion of the Egyptians, for example, was a rough, superstitious, polytheistic religion, in total accord with the ‘primitive’ state of their scientific knowledge. The Egyptian priests were infants (*infantes*) practising disciplines that are traditionally considered to be their inventions. Indeed, the priestly caste, which in Egypt performed a political and bureaucratic function, was not encouraged to cultivate the sciences: “it is highly improbable that the minds of great worth, destined to exercise command, were hidden in the secret, obscure places of the temples to bring the mysteries of nature to light” (*Historia*, p. 41). Therefore, the source of Greek philosophy was not the Egyptians or the occult wisdom of the East in general. This is shown by the fact that the sciences appeared in Greece rather late and progressed slowly. The early physical doctrines of the Greeks were so rough and contradictory that it does not seem possible that they were drawn from only one source. The Greeks were certainly curious about the Egyptians, although not about their knowledge but rather about their peculiar customs, laws, and cults. Moreover, there is no trustworthy evidence confirming this derivation: “One thing is certain: no ancient Greek writer ascribes the science of his people to the barbarians; on the contrary, most of the ancient evidence explicitly attests the infancy and mediocrity (*die Kindheit und Mittelmässigkeit*) of the knowledge possessed by the Asian and African peoples” (*Grundriss*, pp. 6–7).

In Greece, philosophy and the sciences followed a specific geographical movement, from the colonies to the motherland, from Asia Minor to Magna Graecia

and Attica. The condition of Greece strictly speaking was one of poverty until the Persian wars; the sciences originated in the luxury and wealth which prevailed in the colonies, which provided a more favourable geographical and environmental position. For this reason, it was in the cultural context of the Ionian colonies that the seven wise men appeared. Their knowledge was not theoretical but practical, as is also attested by the original meaning of the term ‘wise’, which indicated the possession of abilities, and indeed the wise men were commonly called artisans. ‘Sophist’ (σοφιστής) and ‘wise’ (σοφός) were originally synonyms: the distinction between these two words appeared in the age of Socrates and Plato, when the former acquired a negative connotation and the latter a positive one. Plato engendered a sort of rupture between the literary and the popular use of the term ‘wise’, because he excluded from it the ability which is proper to technical knowledge, so that a ‘wise man’ became he who was able to rise up to contemplate eternal truths. It was in the context of Platonic philosophy that the term ‘philosophy’ acquired its current meaning, which cannot be traced to Pythagoras, to whom however – in this and in several other cases – the Platonic conception was attributed.

Philosophy begins with Thales and the school of Miletus. The sciences follow the arts, and even appear rough and primitive when compared with the perfection already attained by the arts: “Our astonishment is greatly lessened when we think that this happened not only in Greece but can also be observed among all the other peoples, and that man has always found it harder to study himself and nature rather than to imitate and embellish the latter with splendid works” (*Geschichte*, I, p. 143). Among the different parts of philosophy, the first to be cultivated were not, as it would seem natural, the sciences concerning man, but the more abstruse and difficult sciences, such as physics and astronomy. Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes developed the themes present in Hesiod and in the ancient theogonies, and departed little from the popular and religious beliefs of their time. These doctrines, not substantiated with adequate observation and reflection, appeared to be “rough and defective” (I, p. 155).

Meiners describes Pythagoras unreservedly as the greatest philosopher before Socrates, although he does not follow the various testimonies of the Neoplatonists, who judged him to be the instigator of all the most important scientific discoveries: “Now, considering that Pythagoras was born, as it were, together with Greek philosophy and prose, anyone reasonable will think it impossible that he could philosophize like Plato and Aristotle; it is impossible that he, whose phrasing was no less poetical than that of Pherecides, and who lacked all personal and general expression, could write like Plato or speak like Demosthenes” (I, p. 519). Following Aristotle, Meiners relates the question concerning Pythagoras to that of the Milesians: numbers are the principles of things, just as water is for Thales. He judges Pythagoras’ political and pedagogical activity much more positively and he describes it at length and in detail (I, chapter III, pp. 391–510: ‘Von den Einrichtungen und Sätzen der pythagoreischen Gesellschaft’). This is the most important heritage of Pythagoreanism, which is not a contemplative philosophy, as was claimed by the Neoplatonists, but had a fundamental political purpose: “To my mind, the establishment of the Pythagorean school is the sublimest and wisest

system of legislation (*das erhabenste und weiseste System von Gesetzgebung*) which was ever devised for the elevation and perfecting of mankind: a system grounded exclusively on the purest and disinterested virtue, whose object was the happiness of the states as a whole, a system which brings honour not only to the mind and heart of its author but to human nature itself. However, it could only be carried out among a limited number of chosen men" (I, p. 403).

Pythagoras' contemporaries and immediate successors were Xenophanes, Parmenides, Leucippus, and Heraclitus, who kept in view not only Pythagorean philosophy but also Milesian speculation. Yet, they represent no real progress in philosophy: "We have to agree that the early Eleatics, as well as Heraclitus and Leucippus, produced almost nothing important and appropriate for enlarging the knowledge of nature and the human soul, and that almost all these philosophers guessed rather than observed (*mehr gerathen, als beobachtet haben*); hence, towards the LXX Olympiad, in Greece the sciences still lay in their infancy, and finally the Ionian and Pythagorean philosophy could not have been more complete and correct than I have described" (I, p. 630). Meiners is not interested in identifying the school connections between these philosophers: he denies that Leucippus was a disciple of Zeno of Elea and therefore that Atomism was an interpretation of Eleaticism. He emphasizes the differences, rather than the similarities between Xenophanes and Parmenides, since the former considers the universe infinite whereas the latter considers it finite. What is shared by the speculation of Greek philosophers up to Leucippus and Heraclitus is the coarseness of their opinions, which each of them claimed to assert against and apart from the others: "The majority of the philosophers of whom I have spoken hitherto are different from one another and they all equally depart from truth and experience" (I, p. 628).

Compared with the few and often conflicting fragments of earlier philosophers, we possess much more reliable fragments and testimonies of Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Democritus, Zeno, and Melissus, who lived between the LXX and the LXXX Olympiads: texts that "enable us to evaluate accurately the merit of each philosopher and the state of the sciences" (I, p. 634). The philosophical technique becomes more perfect and the observation of nature systematic. The most important of these philosophers was Anaxagoras, who was the first to rise up from earth to heaven towards the author of everything: "The cause of the movement, order, and beauty of the world is absolutely not chance or fate or necessity or a blind nature devoid of reason, but a divinity which dominates from above and penetrates everything (*eine alles überschauende und durchdringende Gottheit*). It alone drew from the bosom of chaos all parts of the universe and ordered them so that the slightest change in the universe cannot take place without its decision and anticipation. Owing to this opinion, Anaxagoras was seen – throughout Antiquity – as the first priest of the true God and the first man to announce the father and architect of the universe" (I, pp. 671–672).

Anaxagoras represents a major turning point in Greek thought. In the *Historia doctrinae de vero Deo*, the whole of ancient philosophy is ordered and arranged in relation to Anaxagoras' great discovery: "After these philosophers, who stammered rather than judging correctly, there finally arose Anaxagoras, who was the first to

dare to state publically that a divine mind had built all things from eternal but disordered matter” (*Historia*, p. 249). The philosophers who precede Anaxagoras are not strictly atheists; rather, they are simply unaware of God’s true nature. They are subdivided into two classes:

1. Those who established only one cause of reality which is either unmoved (Xenophanes and the Eleatics) or eternally in motion (the Ionians and Pythagoreans).
2. Those who defined more than one cause of things, more precisely:
  - (a) an efficient but blind cause, such as amity and enmity (Empedocles);
  - (b) a material cause, such as igneous nature or indivisible bodies (Heraclitus, Democritus).

The successors of Anaxagoras, except for a few who denied the divinity and were atheists, developed his doctrine: Plato and Aristotle attributed the mind with a simple and incorporeal nature, whereas the Stoics gave it a simple but corporeal nature.

After Anaxagoras, but before coming to Socrates, Meiners devotes a whole book to the history of the Sophists (*Geschichte*, II, pp. 1–227: ‘Geschichte der griechischen Sophisten’), whom previous historians had discussed in the margin of Eleatic thought, or within the sceptic trend, or again – more frequently – only indirectly, viewing them through the criticisms formulated by Plato and Aristotle. An extensive analysis of the history of Greece, and in particular of Athens up to the age of Pericles, enables Meiners to approach the treatment of the Sophists with objectivity, freeing them of the undeserved judgements formulated by historians of philosophy. They were neither charlatans nor mere skilful orators, but real philosophers: “The ancient Sophists were the immediate successors of the great philosophers I examined at the end of the first book; therefore they represented an important ring in the chain of the minds who contributed to creating and propagating the sciences in Greece” (II, p. 172). The Sophists possessed all the scientific knowledge of their predecessors, they were the first to teach politics and eloquence, and they engaged in moral research. However, as Socrates, Plato, and Xenophon had rightly observed, there are several reasons for criticising them, not only because they demanded to be paid, but especially because of their fallacious and the dangerous principles; indeed, on a moral and epistemological level, they were atheists and relativists.

From the outset, the figure of Socrates appears as outstanding, heroic, and exemplary: “Not content with having emerged from the abyss of error himself, he also resolved to lead others away from the dangerous principles held by the Sophists of his time and to devote his whole life to serving the divinity, working relentlessly, through his teaching and by setting a good example, to make his fellow citizens wise and happy” (II, pp. 351–352). The main contribution made by Socrates consists in his identification of the chief task of philosophy as the study of man and his moral refinement: “For him, the primary activity of a true philosopher, which indeed he imposed on himself, was to study the nature of man and cultivate his own perfection. He made philosophy into the science of man (*Wissenschaft des Menschen*), a science which must teach him to know and better himself” (II, p. 386).

Following Xenophon, there are essentially five doctrines ascribed to Socrates: a) the development of Anaxagoras' theology; b) the statement that the nature of the soul is different from that of the body and is immortal; c) the consequentiality of virtue and happiness; d) the connection between virtue and knowledge; and e) the indissoluble link between life and thought. It is above all the latter aspect of Socratism that is admired by Meiners, who finds in Socrates's philosophy and life rules for moral behaviour: "Socrates not only taught virtue, but also practised it; his whole life was even purer and freer of fault than his philosophy was free of error. I do not know of anyone else, in all Greek and Roman Antiquity, whose conduct was so irreproachable and exemplary and whose character so perfect in all regards. We may say that this wise man rose high above the vices of his contemporaries and almost all the weaknesses of his species" (II, p. 466).

Compared with the lucid, authentic, and experienced philosophy of Socrates, Plato's philosophy appears to be less consistent and topical, even though its legacy has been greater on a historical plane: "Plato was not the greatest of Socrates's friends, but was certainly the subtlest mind, the most profound inventor of suppositions and sophisms, and the most elegant and successful educator of outstanding men, of whom his Academy produced a greater amount than all the other Socratic schools. Socrates's philosophy may be compared to a robust trunk from which a number of branches sprouted which spread throughout Greece, whereas Plato's works may be compared to an abundant source from which all subsequent philosophers drew, even those who parted from him, contested him, or derided him" (II, p. 683). The positive part of Platonism is related to a development of Socratic themes; by contrast, the revival and assimilation of the various doctrines of the pre-Socratics and the research carried out on paths other than those followed by Socrates introduced contradictions and confusion into Platonism: "In my view, Plato deserves to be praised more for having reported Socrates's discourses and continued his thoughts rather than for having forcedly mixed the latter with other thoughts scarcely adaptable to them, having devoted himself to objects of research that Socrates did not even approach, and having attempted to penetrate a multitude of things that Socrates considered to be impenetrable. Almost every step Plato made outside Socrates's philosophy led him to useless subtleties, or vain dreams, or gross mistakes" (II, pp. 698–699).

Plato's poetical style is highly praised, although it is hardly appropriate to the nature of philosophical language. For this reason his dialogues are very difficult to read and interpret, and even more difficult to summarize and report in a general history of philosophy. Meiners decides to abandon the traditional subdivision of the dialogues, which is of no help for understanding Platonic thought, and he puts forward a new classification, which he considers useful especially to those young readers who are approaching Plato's texts for the first time, because it is based on a progression of the stylistic and speculative difficulties and on a greater or lesser accordance with Socratic thought. One should start from the dialogues in which Plato explains the principles held by his master and follows his master's method (*Apology*, *Crito*, *Alcibiades*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*), then one should approach the dialogues in which Plato competes with the greatest poets and orators

(*Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and a part of the *Republic*) and those which are not totally incompatible with Socrates's thought (*Laws*); the last dialogues to be examined are those in which Plato repeats or refutes the subtleties of the Eleatics and Sophists, but without expressing his own opinion (*Parmenides*, *Cratylus*, *Meno*) or in which he expounds his particular doctrines contrary to Socrates's philosophy (*Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Republic*).

The foundation of Platonic philosophy is represented by the doctrine of ideas. These exist, immutable and eternal, in the divine mind and cannot be conceived as substances separate from things, subsisting as such, according to an interpretation which takes into account neither the most famous interpretations formulated in Antiquity or the words of the philosopher himself, who repeatedly compares ideas to the patterns followed by artists in their work. The doctrine of ideas enabled Plato to overcome the aporias of Heraclitus and Parmenides and provided the possibility of science with a foundation: "Only ideas, or patterns, constitute the essence of things, and together with their father [God] form the only species of immutable and imperishable things. By contrast, bodies can be viewed as real things only in an improper sense, because they are subject to unceasing alteration and even to perishing. The former are the only object of truth, and authentic wisdom consists exclusively in knowing and seeking them. By contrast, the latter can only be the object of true or false *opinions* and can never produce a certain and undisputable knowledge because at the very moment in which they are grasped as true, they change and are no longer the same" (II, pp. 730–731).

Except for reflections concerning the language of the *Cratylus*, "which illustrates all that can be said about the question relating to the nature and qualities of composite words" (II, p. 770), the best part of Platonic philosophy is theology, in which the ideas of Anaxagoras and Socrates are taken up and consistently developed. It certainly contains some contradictions, such as the theory of the soul of the world, whose creation is described by Plato "as if he had been present during God's work", but none of the Greeks spoke about divine nature and providence as clearly as Plato did or struggled against superstition as much as he did (*Historia*, pp. 398 and 409–415).

The conclusion to book VIII (which was to be the last) of Meiners' *Geschichte der Wissenschaften* provides an overall picture of the progress made by the sciences in Greece from their origin up to the age of Plato. In the period between Anaxagoras and Plato, the human mind made greater and more rapid progress than it had made previously or was to make subsequently. All sciences were cultivated successfully and, while much progress still had to be made in the field of the sciences of nature, the science of man was almost brought to perfection: "The Sophists, Socrates, and Plato studied the nature of sensations, the differences and value of the human faculties, the origin and nature of the desires and passions, the value of pleasure and pain, and lastly the advantages and disadvantages of all virtues and all vices with such sharpness and profundity that little remained for posterity to observe and affirm concerning several of these themes" (*Geschichte*, II, p. 791).

Greek philosophy after Plato is briefly examined in the *Grundriss der Geschichte der Weltweisheit* and, more extensively but with specific reference to the theological



question, in the *Historia doctrinae de vero Deo*. The most important figures are Aristotle and the Stoics. Aristotle is not only considered to be the privileged source for reconstructing the history of earlier thought, but also “the greatest, sharpest, and most cultivated philosopher produced by Greece up to that time” (*Grundriss*, p. 96). If we compare, for example, Aristotle’s books on logic with the dialectic of his predecessors, we can clearly see that, in this field, Aristotle was the greatest inventor. Among works on speculative philosophy, Meiners reckons the most important to be the eight books of the *Physics*, although the *Historia doctrinae de vero Deo* focuses chiefly on the *Metaphysics* in order to evaluate the Aristotelian concept of the divinity. Aristotle takes up Platonic theology and demonstrates the existence of God as unmoved mover or first principle of motion. In this regard, he also refers back to the themes developed by the pre-Socratics but, following Anaxagoras and Plato, attributes the principle of motion to “a most excellent mind”. Divine providence is wholly in conformity with his system, as attested by the last chapter of book XII of the *Metaphysics*: “Aristotle affirms that all that exists and becomes in the world is oriented towards a particular unitary end, whereas individual things, in proportion to their excellence and the quality of their nature, are also assigned different parts and dissimilar places” (*Historia*, pp. 430–431). The doctrine of the eternity of the world is neither weak nor contradictory, but derives from the idea of God as unmoved mover. By contrast, a doctrine that warrants criticism is the doctrine of the fifth essence, which is described as something divine and eternal, with which Aristotle wished to justify the possibility that the human soul is immortal: “These Aristotelian theories concerning the fifth body are in contrast not only to the nature of things but also to the whole of his doctrine, so much so that I do not hesitate to affirm that even an extremely bitter adversary of his could hardly have attributed him with such a monstrous opinion, which would demolish and destroy his philosophy” (*Historia*, p. 449).

Meiners’ intention is to re-evaluate the Stoics after the unjust accusations aimed at them by modern historians, from Jakob Thomasius to Buddeus, Brucker, and Ernesti: “Most of these accusations are totally groundless. If one compares Zeno and his first two successors with the philosophers of the ancient Academy and with Aristotle and Theophrastus, one becomes aware that, even during the first generation after Alexander, not only eloquence and the other arts but also philosophy and philosophical language had declined. Despite all the faults shown by the Stoics, we should not forget their merits in regard to some important doctrines, nor should we forget how much Rome is indebted to them – not only in the age of the Republic, but also during the first two centuries after Christ” (*Grundriss*, p. 112). It had been about Stoic theology that historians of philosophy expressed most reservations, and it is precisely Stoic theology that Meiners intends to re-evaluate. Following the Plato of the *Timaeus*, the Stoics identified two causes of reality, “one of which produced everything, whereas the other offered itself (as a tool) to the former” (*Historia*, p. 463). They maintained the existence of an efficient cause endowed with reason, by bringing forward even more numerous and excellent arguments than Plato, and described the nature of the divinity with wonderful words. They also addressed the problem of evil and answered it in a Leibnizian fashion: “They observed that

countless goods which the goodness of the Creator did not allow to be absent from the world are very closely joined to opposite evils, from whence they concluded that the greatest amount of goods could not exist if as many evils, opposed to them, had not been introduced and admitted into the world and joined to them indissolubly" (*Historia*, pp. 487–488).

Meiners takes a more critical position on Epicurus who, in his view, contributed – together with the Sceptics and more than the Stoics – to the decline of philosophy in the Hellenistic period (*Grundriss*, p. 132). Epicurus believed that the creation of the world was an excessive endeavour for the divinity, and so he assigned it to chance; he thought that the world, being imperfect, could not be the work of that which is perfect, and did not find any reason why God should have created it. Resting on this basis, it was not possible to build a rational theology; it follows that the Epicurean conception of the gods is totally contradictory, and indeed it seems to be excluded by ethics itself: "Who, pray, still doubts that this man contradicted himself shamefully when he recommended a disinterested piety and a kind of worship of the gods which produces no pleasure and no advantage at all?" (*Historia*, p. 547).

Moving on to the Romans, besides confuting several 'fables', such as that which had Numa Pompilius as a pupil of Pythagoras, Meiners follows the gradual incorporation of Greek culture into the Latin world, ascribing substantial merits to the work of Cicero, "who made the Romans familiar with all the systems of the Greeks and whose philosophical works are nothing other than free translations or quotations from fragments written by the Greek philosophers" (*Grundriss*, p. 153). The history of thought in the Roman age is, nevertheless, the history of the decline of philosophy. This already manifested itself in the age of Augustus, a period which was not as "golden" as is commonly believed; on the other hand, observes Meiners, civil wars and the despotism of the emperors could not bring about better results. A consequence of this was the diffusion of *Schwärmerey* among the learned as well: "The more the arts and the sciences, the morals and the Roman Empire itself declined, the more all kinds of fanaticism and superstition increased, particularly an inclination towards foreign religions and the false arts, then included under the name of magic" (p. 157). *Schwärmerey* attained its highest degree among the Pythagoreans (Apollonius of Tyana, Moderatus of Gades) and the Platonists (Plutarch and Apuleius), but also penetrated into the other schools and even contaminated the doctrine of several Fathers of the Church (from Athenagoras, Justin, and Clement of Alexandria to Origen, Arnobius, and Lactantius), excepting only Eusebius and Augustine.

*Schwärmerey* was also the dominant element in Neoplatonism: "If one is aware of the state of the Roman Empire, of the condition of the sciences, the arts, the language of the Greeks and the Romans, and one thinks about the mentality prevailing among most learned people of these nations during the first two centuries of the Empire, and at the same time one considers that everything that was degenerate became more and more corrupt and everything that had started to fall into decline continued to sink lower and lower, then one is no longer astonished that the philosophers of the third and following centuries pursued the path of their predecessors and, more particularly, in Alexandria a sect arose which admitted and expanded all the

*Schwärmereyen* and superstitions of the Pythagoreans” (p. 171). Meiners asserts that he intends to deliver the Neoplatonists from some of the accusations formulated against them by Brucker (cf. *Models* II, pp. 525–527): namely, that their aim was to reconcile the schools in order to provide paganism, by then in decline, with a philosophical foundation, and that they feigned miracles and ascribed themselves with extraordinary powers in order to compete with the Christians; but he does not go so far as to put forward a new interpretation of Neoplatonism, as Tiedemann was to do in part (see below, Sect. 9.5.4.3). Meiners merely insists on the concept of *Schwärmerei* and notices in Neoplatonism a worsening of the philosophical attitude which was typical of that period; he even defines the features characterizing Plotinus as “a dim picture revealing the decline of all sound philosophy and the mentality prevailing at the time” (*Grundriss*, p. 174).

Medieval philosophy continues to be interpreted on the basis of the idea of decline and barbarism. Meiners identifies the eleventh century as the nadir of Western culture; yet, it was then that new progress began, fostered precisely by the phenomenon that also represented the most negative outcome of medieval barbarism and obscurantism: “In the eleventh century, the Crusades and the ever growing power and wealth of the hierarchy seemed to place new obstacles before the *Aufklärung*; but it was precisely the Crusades that contributed more than anything else to the diffusion of better knowledge, to the reawakening of freedom, and to laying the foundations of the power and commerce of the European kingdoms” (p. 203). Meiners identifies the factors determining the progress of philosophy as the establishment of the universities, in particular the university of Paris, and the circulation of Aristotle’s works; but when he comes to an overall assessment of the phenomenon of Scholasticism he remains faithful to the critical attitude customary in the historiography of philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an attitude that he slightly mitigates by using the impersonal form: “The most severe reproaches aimed at the Scholastics are chiefly the following: not only did they neglect the Latin language but they corrupted it on purpose; they almost completely neglected the more useful of the sciences, especially physics, natural history, medicine, and mathematics; they distorted with extremely useless and impious sophisms the more useless sciences they cultivated, and these therefore became corruptors of the intellect and heart of the young. All these reproaches are well-founded but must be imputed less to the Scholastics than to the times in which they lived” (pp. 213–214).

Meiners’ treatment of the modern philosophers is lengthier than that of the medieval thinkers, although he mostly limits himself to presenting their lives and works and listing their doctrines, without trying to elaborate any comprehensive interpretation. The judgement he formulates on the contribution of the religious Reformation to the progress of philosophy is worth mentioning. Meiners intends to avoid the over-enthusiasm which had characterized seventeenth-century historiography, but at the same time warns the reader against the unilateral understatements which started to appear at that time. In his view, Melanchthon – “Germany’s venerable master” – promoted the dissemination of the *Aufklärung* better and more profoundly than Luther; but, he warns, let us not forget that the reformers were

not able to free themselves from the prejudices typical of their age: the belief in astrology, divination, and magic. The latter, “more than any other, cost the lives of many innocent men” (pp. 224).

The great philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are examined, far from any school connection, by providing descriptions of their works and brief notes concerning their characters and the methods they followed. These are short but interesting judgements which enable us to understand the tastes and speculative choices of the author himself: according to Meiners, Descartes devoted himself more to cultivating the mind than the heart; Malebranche offered a fundamental contribution to the development of psychology and logic, but was committed to mystical theology; the *Art de penser* enjoyed a great success because it united the better part of the Aristotelian *Organon* with the Cartesian method; Spinoza, “an irreproachable man with an admirable character”, built a false system, since he took as a presupposition the possibility of transferring geometrical argumentation to philosophy, an error which was soon to be repeated by Leibniz and Wolff; Bayle promoted the *Aufklärung* more than anyone else, although in a negative manner, through doubt and criticism of prejudices; Ch. Thomasius deserves immortal glory for his *De crimine magiae* alone; Wolff overestimated himself and his own philosophy, although his excessively technical language and mathematical method in practice did more harm than good; finally, Berkeley was the first true “idealist” of history.

As for the last observation, it is to be noted that Tiedemann was later to render “idealism” a vast historical category, capable of embracing the entire development of thought, from Xenophanes to Kant. The conclusion to this textbook reveals no hints, as might have been expected, of the polemic against Kant which was raised by Garve, Feder, and Tiedemann precisely on the basis of the accusation of idealism and the comparison of critical philosophy to Berkeley’s idealism. It seems that, although in the same year (1786), in the ‘Vorrede’ to his *Grundriss der Seelen-Lehre*, he was to radically attack Kant’s philosophy, Meiners intends here to defend Berkeley’s idealism: “He proceeds from the same principles as Malebranche and Leibniz, and there is no denying that he came to better conclusions than these two philosophers. He represents the most evident proof that idealism does not lead to a dangerous form of incredulity, as the most recent Scottish philosophers feared” (p. 302).

**9.2.4.4** On a methodological plane, the most obvious aspect of Meiners’ historiography is the large amount of space he devotes to describing the historical and political background to the history of the philosophical sciences. In the *Geschichte der Wissenschaften*, this widening of the historiographical perspective is required by the object of the work itself, which consists in examining the relationship between civil and political history and the history of the sciences. Some of the books are chiefly devoted to the history of Greek civilization, as in the case of the first book (‘Ueber den ältesten Zustand von Griechenland, und das Zeitalter der sieben Weisen’, I, pp. 1–138), whereas other books are divided into two parts, which first of all narrate the conditions and the historical events and then the vicissitudes and progress of the sciences. The general orientation of Meiners’ interpretation appears

to be determined by the various observations emerging from political history. The movement of philosophy, from Asia Minor to southern Italy and Greece strictly speaking, is to be explained, as we have seen before, in the context of the historical situation in which the earlier phase of Greek civilization developed.

Even more explicit is the link between the history of philosophy and the history of Greek civilization in the age of the Sophists and Socrates, when “the intellectual lights and the thirst for knowledge suddenly spread among the upper classes of European Greece, which shortly before had still been buried in the sleep of ignorance”, and Athens raised itself to become “a master and ruler of the Greek peoples”. This phenomenon can only be understood, observes Meiners, through a knowledge of the history of Athens and the whole of Greece: “I shall therefore describe these two things insofar as it is relevant to my object, because this task has never been accomplished before and because, without this work, I would be able to offer to my readers nothing other than effects without their causes or mutilated facts and disconnected events (*als Wirkungen ohne Ursachen, oder als verstümmelte Facta und Begebenheiten ohne Verbindung*)” (*Geschichte*, II, pp. 1–2).

The results of this historical work, however, are not relevant to an understanding of the doctrines. In truth, the historian does not always try to establish this link, and he makes use of digressions concerning the historical and political conditions to outline a general cultural background, without drawing from them any specific elements for interpreting the philosophical systems. A gap is created, therefore, between a history of culture considered as a framework (which concerns the history of philosophy only with reference to those movements which had a more direct influence on a political level, such as the Pythagorean and the Sophist) and a history of philosophical ideas and scientific discoveries which, in practice, is not so different from the history provided by Brucker and the previous literature; indeed, this kind of history follows an inner logic, with a vague connection, more frequently implicit than declared, with the general cultural tendencies. Thus, on the one hand, the foundation of natural theology thanks to Anaxagoras and its development thanks to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics actually corresponds to progress in the arts and the sciences in Greece from the age of Pericles onwards; while, on the other hand, there is a contrast with some other aspects of Greek civilization of that period, such as a parallel increase in the corruption of morals and the political crisis of the Greek cities. Wealth and luxury are sometimes numbered among the causes of the progress of the arts and the sciences, as in the case of Greece, whereas in other cases, such as Rome, they are seen as the chief cause of that decline. Moreover, the elaboration of general categories – such as that of *Schwärmerey*, by which Meiners denotes the cultural tendency of the Roman age – certainly does not place the historian in a position to enable him to understand the philosophical value of the doctrines developed by the Neoplatonists and the Fathers of the Church.

Meiners’ other great concern is to provide documentation which is philologically correct and to base his historical reconstruction not so much on the works of modern authors as on the ancient sources and testimonies. With respect to previous historiography, Meiners believes he has produced a work which is effectively new and valuable not only on a historical plane but also from a critical, philological

point of view. The agenda of this new kind of historiography is polemically outlined in response to some not entirely favourable reviews, written concerning the first volume of his work (see below, Sect. 9.2.5): “Many readers will be surprised by the fact that I have not mentioned either my predecessors or the authors whose writings I consider to be the archives of ancient philosophy, unless I found something in them I did not wish to say or repeat. This silence is not to be attributed to a proud contempt for the merits of these scholars, nor from my ignorance or lack of reading, since I have read all their works at a certain time, even though I did not consult them when I was drawing up this part of my text, nor shall I resort to them in future; rather, it is due to my way of working (*in meiner Art zu arbeiten*), which I have used for many years. I have long observed that all compilations, even those that are judged to be the most useful and perfect, still remain defective and imperfect, and their authors usually transcribe passages written by the ancients from other authors or even from digests, while they neglect precisely the most important passages, which can provide a knowledge of the customs, mentality, and character of the ages and individuals; finally I have observed that the testimonies were presented to a great extent in a mutilated state or in an improper light. I therefore decided to do without the weak and uncertain aid that could be derived from the compilations of Brucker, Stanley, and others, and read anew all the authors on whom they drew, or should have drawn, as if they had never been read and used” (*Geschichte*, I, ‘Vorrede’, pp. XXVIII–XXX).

It is not enough to refer back to the sources: these must be examined with a view to their authenticity, following the rules of historical criticism. This art, as Meiners makes clear, consists in being able to recognize the importance, authority, and authenticity of texts or fragments, in establishing to what extent each author is trustworthy, in seeking the origins of and the changes in expressions and opinions, in discovering the unknown authors of the fragments, and in solving the contradictions between the different testimonies. This art, which Meiners describes as one of the most difficult arts the human mind has managed to invent and which he himself learnt at the school of Heyne, imparts solidity and objectivity to the work of the historian; if it is absent, the most difficult research into ancient history is nothing other than a futile dream or an artificial edifice built on sand (*eitle Träume oder künstliche Gebäude auf Sand gebaut*). Meiners wishes to give an example of the art of criticism in his treatment of the Pythagorean school, on which he dwells at length “on purpose, not only to clarify several obscure questions, but above all to make young readers of this work aware of the principles of historical criticism and, at the same time, to provide them with some examples of its application” (I, p. XXVII).

The first chapter of the book on Pythagoras is therefore devoted to studying the sources (I, pp. 187–303). At the beginning, Meiners lists ten rules intended to establish the value and truthfulness of the testimonies: authors who in Antiquity were commonly acknowledged to be trustworthy and who lived in a period close to the events considered must be admitted as reliable guides, even though, concerning some particular issues, they made some mistakes or manifested one-sided attitudes; what we consider to be incredible and fabulous, in other ages might have appeared as possible; we should make a distinction between fables told in good faith and those that are fiction; credibility decreases in relation to the distance in time from

the testimonies; accounts with which all the sources, ancient and more recent, are in agreement are certain, while testimonies documented only by ancient sources are credible, and more recent testimonies conflicting with the ancient ones are unlikely. If we apply these rules to the multitude of documents concerning the school of Pythagoras, we come to the conclusion that the most important and reliable source is Aristotle because

- (a) he refers back to the ancient Pythagoreans;
- (b) thanks to his erudition and wisdom, he is the only one who can be truthful;
- (c) he did not distort Pythagoras' doctrines, just as he generally did not distort the doctrines of the other philosophers mentioned in his writings.

To the contrary, we should leave out the testimony of Heracleides and Clearchus, both contemporaries of Aristotle, whose accounts of Pythagoras were completely invented and became the sources of the later reconstructions elaborated by the Neoplatonists. Great importance, on the other hand, is given to the fragments written by Aristoxenus, a fellow-disciple of Theophrastus, and those by Dicearchus. All later testimonies are rather doubtful: some, like Hermippus, even started to relate Pythagoras' travels and miracles, and told all sorts of wonderful things about him.

The image of Pythagoras transmitted by the ancient world is that which was formed during the Christian era, starting with Apollonius of Tyana, "a fanatic and an impostor" (who re-enacted in his life the actions he claimed had been performed by Pythagoras), and Moderatus of Gades, who, believing that Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics had taken their thought from Pythagoras, "gave Pythagorean philosophy a totally Platonised form" (I, p. 249). Apollonius and Moderatus provide the bases of the famous lives of Pythagoras written by Porphyry and Iamblichus, which also contain the most important passages from the writings of several previous authors, in many cases not named. Meiners thinks it inappropriate to blame Porphyry and Iamblichus, as was common at the time, for inventing Pythagoras' miracles in order to discredit the Christian religion; rather, they did nothing but strengthen the images and doctrines which for some centuries had already been ascribed to Pythagoras. Finally, Meiners also identifies fragments taken from previous authors within the lives written by Porphyry and Iamblichus, so as to check the reliability of each single reference.

Such analytical and detailed criticism of the sources is reserved exclusively for the Pythagorean school, although other parts of the history of philosophy are no less documented. In the second book, where Meiners deals with the school of Miletus, he makes use of more than forty citations from Herodotus as well as a number of other citations from Aristotle, Plutarch and Pseudo-Plutarch (*De placitis philosophorum*), Stobaeus, Diogenes Laertius, and the Latin authors Cicero, Pliny, and Seneca. Citations from Sextus Empiricus are on the whole rather frequent, whereas those from the Fathers of the Church are occasional, unless they contain fragments and passages from more ancient authors, as in the case of Pseudo-Origen (*Philosophoumena*) and Eusebius. The fragments available are usually summarized within the text and quoted in the original language in the footnotes; those authors whose work is preserved, like Plato and Aristotle, are examined on the basis of the works themselves rather than through testimonies.

In the *Geschichte der Wissenschaften*, the narrative is particularly linear and lively. Meiners rejects the scholastic, systematic method applied in the *Historia critica philosophiae*; he does not subdivide the long chapters into different paragraphs, nor does he break doctrines into the sequences of philosophemes, which, according to Brucker, should display the inner composition of the system. Meiners' discourse flows uninterrupted: sources and testimonies are used to integrate the historical picture which is gradually taking shape as if a story. The testimonies, fragments, and passages from the works are never quoted literally but are summarized and inserted – unbroken – throughout the narrative, whereas the problems relating to a criticism of the sources and the quotations are the object of extended footnotes.

We can identify a particular scheme in Meiners' method by examining, for example, the chapter on Plato (*Geschichte*, II, pp. 683–808). After a brief description of the figure of Plato, viewed in relation to Socrates, Meiners deals with those elements which characterize the philosopher's intelligence and personality, whereas he places less significance on biographical episodes and even the journeys to Sicily. Further, he extensively examines the style of the dialogues, brilliant and well-chosen from a literary viewpoint but of little effect on a philosophical plane. The historian is aware of the difficulties which arise when dealing with Plato's philosophy: "Thought and expression are so merged and intertwined in him, that it seems difficult to separate them without distorting the former or doing it wrong" (II, p. 705); indeed, it is impossible to cite all of Plato's works. Meiners believes that he has managed to condense the subject matter of the dialogues, preserving Plato's meaning, but with greater order and clarity: "I do not claim to be able to collect Plato's thoughts in a connected and uninterrupted whole, but I am proud to present them according to a more appropriate order than that followed in his writings or even in his mind, thus offering no other advantage, however, than being considered more easily as a whole" (II, p. 707). Plato's thought is set out according to the partitions and the order in which the philosopher, in Meiners' view, had conceived it: first of all physics, which is defined as the science of divinity, matter, and world, then the doctrine of the soul and dialectic, and finally morals and politics. Meiners' judgements and comments are frequent here: he judges Platonic physics (or rather theology) to be less clear and convincing than Socratic physics, considers the theory of ideas to be the foundation of Platonism, praises the reflections concerning language and the arguments in favour of the immortality of the soul, and considers political utopia to be the least plausible of the fictions invented by Plato.

The opportunities for reflection and positions held by Meiners are numerous and they sometimes risk breaking the continuity of the narrative; we often come across extemporaneous and unexpected observations; for example, when speaking of the Athenian general Myronides, whose victories were greater than those of Miltiades and Themistocles but whose name is almost unknown, Meiners observes: "It is certain that the high esteem accorded to heroes does not depend exclusively on their merit, but much more on particular circumstances and especially on the worth attributed to those historians who hand down their deeds to the posterity" (II, p. 139).

Meiners is attentive to the pedagogical function of his work: he wishes to show the people of his time, especially young people, whom he often addresses,



a scientific and moral ideal which, like many of his contemporaries, he believes he can recognize in Socrates. He makes so many digressions and moralistic tirades that it sometimes seems as if we are dealing with an edifying work rather than a historical account. Noteworthy, at least in part, are the reflections on Socrates, which Meiners formulates immediately after the account of his death, described with great involvement and emotion: “My dear reader, if you have followed me hitherto without shedding a tear together with the friends of the man who never cried, without being filled with respect and admiration for the man who feared only vice, while he respected and honoured only virtue and virtuous men, and finally without acknowledging that you are still far from being that which Socrates was, from doing what he did, then I can do nothing but mourn your heart and mind, you are not worthy to know the man I have just described, and surely you would be rejected by him, if he were still alive. And you, young man full of hope, noble man, whose soul is pervaded by the love of virtue, when you are confronted with the poor picture I have described, enfold within your heart the entire image of this sage, consult him (every time you wish to do something) like an oracle of truth and virtue, pay him the tribute of your gratitude if you have managed to become similar to him in some occurrence, and feel ashamed in front of him when you have departed from him” (II, p. 516).

Meiners’ interest in the historiography of philosophy is related to his research into the history of human civilization, and more particularly into the religious ideas of primitive peoples. The *Geschichte der Wissenschaften* represents the natural continuation and integration of this research, resting on the conviction that culture reached its maturity only within the Hellenic civilization, thanks to the formation of those arts and sciences which were later to become a legacy for the whole of humanity. This is the reason why Meiners’ major work on the history of philosophy, although incomplete if compared with the original plan, follows a single source of inspiration and, in its own way, can be considered as complete. Indeed, it describes the origin and progress (*den Ursprung und Fortgang*) of the sciences during the only historical period in which they could originate and progress; other epochs, such as the Roman age, can be understood through the category of decline (*Verfall*); while others, such as the Renaissance and the modern age, can be understood through the categories of renewal and progress – but not of the birth of science.

Meiners points out the novelty of his working method compared with previous historiography: as we have seen, he describes Stanley and Brucker as “compilers”, while he reserves the title of “historian” and “critic” for himself. The distance from Brucker is evident and even appears in the title of the works we have examined, in which the term *Philosophie* is replaced by other more general terms, such as *Weltweisheit* or *Wissenschaft*, in order to designate a context of questions and problems undoubtedly broader than that described in the *Historia critica*. The difference is due not so much to the greater amount of space devoted to the description of the historical and cultural framework as to the centrality accorded to ‘culture’, here broadly understood as synonymous with civilization, with respect to ‘philosophy’ and the other artistic and literary phenomena similar to it. Phenomena like the history of peoples and the history of philosophy, Meiners warns, are

inseparable from one another, even though up to that time they had never been studied with a view to their mutual relations (see *Geschichte*, II, p. IV). Defining the object of the history of philosophy, which was given priority in Brucker's historiographical theory, is of little interest for Meiners, who limits himself to listing the disciplines which, during various ages, were gathered under the name of philosophy; greater emphasis is placed on the study of the relationship between the history of (philosophical-metaphysical, ethical-theological, and scientific) ideas and the history of social, political, and economic phenomena, although it is to be acknowledged that this research remains for Meiners an intention merely declared rather than accomplished.

**9.2.5** The accusation of being a mere compiler that was aimed at Brucker was – as often happens in such cases – soon turned on Meiners himself by the generation of historians that immediately followed. Tennemann judged Meiners' textbook on the history of philosophy to be among the least successful and useful: "instead of being a real history, it contains sketches of the lives of philosophers, quotations from their writings, and observations concerning some of their theories. It abounds more in quotations, mainly drawn from the texts written by the authors, than in authentic historical material; moreover, these quotations are not always reported with exactness, nor are they adequately worked out on the whole. The structure of the work shows that the author did not base himself on a reliable viewpoint in order to choose and connect the facts" (W.G. Tennemann, 'Uebersicht des Vorzüglichstens, was für die Geschichte der Philosophie seit 1780 geleistet worden', PhJ, III [1796], p. 67). Despite the different size of Meiners' other work, the *Geschichte der Wissenschaften*, Tennemann is inclined to exclude it from the historiographical literature concerning ancient philosophy, "because its object is not only philosophy" and, furthermore, "the biographies, the portraits of the philosophers, the reflection on the texts, and the historical presentation of the doctrines are nothing other than material and studies – partly valuable – preparatory to the elaboration of that kind of history" (p. 86).

The earlier judgements had seemed to be more positive. The *Historia doctrinae de vero Deo* had been described as the work of a philosopher, not that of a compiler: "This work by professor Meiners has provided natural theology, and philosophy in general, with an important contribution. Collecting mere facts is proper to the compiler; arranging them according to a sequence and endowing them with well-founded arguments is the work of the philosopher. This appears from each page of this work" (NPhL, IV [1780], p. 130). Equally positive had been the reception given to the *Geschichte der Wissenschaften* (GA, 1783, no. 7, p. 70); but Meiners' response to the review which appeared in the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, the famous Berlin magazine edited by Nicolai, must have harmed his reputation. The reviewer had expressed reservations, in particular about what he considered to be the excessive autonomy accorded to Greek thought in relation to Eastern thought; Meiners took offence and asserted the seriousness of his work, even doubting the reviewer's ability to express judgements upon it (*Geschichte*, II, 'Vorrede', pp. IX–X). It was therefore easy for the same reviewer, when the second volume appeared, to discredit not only the scientific value of the *Geschichte der Wissenschaften*, but

also to berate the temperament and conceit of its author: "These matters can and must be debated with a cool head. If a writer shows that he cannot accept any objection, it becomes impossible to carry on the search for truth" (ADBibl., LV/2, 1783, p. 510).

The above incident, in addition to the anti-Kantian battle waged by Meiners together with Feder, Eberhard, and Tiedemann, and the disrepute into which the *Popularphilosophie* movement had fallen in the last decade of the century, may explain the severe judgement expressed by Tennemann cited above. The new historical perspective claimed by Meiners was largely ignored; at most, commentators pointed out the other aspect of his method, the collection of material on a philological basis (cf. Buhle, I, p. 6; Ernesti, p. 104), a task for which, however, Meiners was considered to be unprepared and inadequately skilled, as Carus remarked: "Too frequently he discovered contradictions, strange and inexplicable ideas, because he did not refer to the inner coherence connecting the fragmentary statements and their sources, and he did not strive to gain philosophical insight into the ultimate and deep reasons" (Carus, pp. 84–85).

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Meiners' work as a historian of philosophy had been almost forgotten in Germany; he enjoyed greater success in France, where the *Geschichte der Wissenschaften* was translated into five volumes, ensuring it a European circulation. Meiners' work was reckoned among the best histories published on Greek civilization, besides the *History of Ancient Greece* (London, 1786) by John Gillies. After quoting a favourable judgement expressed by Gillies himself, Chardon de la Rochette, the author of the 'Préface' to the French translation, adds his own personal remarks: "Among all the modern works on Greece, none teaches us as many things as Meiners' work, none embraces as many profound visions, shows as much wisdom and sharpness and true philosophy. With a steady hand the author erases all the false traditions which made part of the philosophy of the Greeks so obscure" (*Histoire [ . . . ] des sciences dans la Grèce*, I, p. 55). Meiners continued to be read and used in France for a certain period of time, as Degérando confirms: "In this regard, the learned and tireless Meiners has every right to deserve our gratitude; no one has provided such valuable help to those who engage in this kind of difficult research and need above all to know which guides must be chosen and on which sources they must draw" (Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, p. 163). Pointing out with admiration the state of historical studies in Germany, Degérando later added these words: "Some devote themselves to the materials, some take on the task of choosing them, and others of preparing them. There are those, like Meiners, who apply themselves exclusively to presenting sources and guides, there are those who concern themselves with classifying, and those who choose and collect the most valuable documents and then offer them as texts available for reflection" (p. 165).

In the twentieth century, Meiners' production was mostly recognized for its contribution to the field of anthropology and the history of religion. As a historian, Fueter describes Meiners as "a not very original popularizer" of the ideas of Montesquieu and Voltaire (*Geschichte der neueren Historiographie*, p. 385); Freyer reckons him among the representatives of the historiography of philosophy who are themselves "popular philosophers", of whom, however, he is one of the worst

(*einer der schlimmsten*) (Freyer, p. 63); and more particularly, it has been denied that he possessed a real sense of history (von Selle, *Die Georg-August-Universität*, p. 178). M. Wundt has partially corrected these judgements by referring Meiners' historical production back to his own century. Wundt obviously does not intend to revive Meiners, but he avoids summary condemnations, which derive from a perspective – that of nineteenth-century historical studies – alien to the problems and methodology of Meiners: “His contribution remains significant for us as a testimony of his time. In this way, it clearly appears that the sphere of historical interests expands remarkably beyond the political field and that, in any case, attempts were made to go further than a mere account of details to arrive at a unitary understanding which is gained by starting from the doctrine of man, and for this reason judgements are always formulated following ethical and psychological criteria. As for the broadening of the historical horizon and the efforts to gain deeper insight into events, that period can be considered, in this regard as well, as a forerunner to Romanticism” (Wundt, pp. 285–286).

Braun follows this line of interpretation. Meiners' contribution to the development of the historiography of philosophy is twofold: first of all, it manifests itself in the fact that he directs his attention to critical philological problems; secondly it can be seen in his awareness of the “historical conditioning of philosophies”, which introduces two new concepts, “mentality” (*Denkart*) and the “spirit of the times” (*Zeitgeist*). “These concerns indicate that Meiners belongs to the generation that discovered the historicity of human things. Since he was receptive to the discrepancy between cultures and their becoming, he tries to rethink the history of philosophy as part of a more general history, thus placing all doctrines within an unavoidable relativity. Metaphysics as the science of being is therefore discredited. Meiners regards it as nothing other than a useful study intended to illustrate the origin of our ideas on things and ourselves. But this relativity, together with his practice of establishing a progression within fixed sequences, also leads him to examine the objects of study more globally. Facts have become less important than the functions which comprise them, parts less important than the rhythm followed by the whole” (Braun, p. 177).

We must mention, however, the limitations of Meiners' concept of history, which were clear to his contemporaries right from the beginning when they praised his work as a learned compiler and partly as a critic of the sources, but much less as a historian. He was a skilful collector of material taken from the most varied sources, but he often lacked the ability to summarize; besides indulging in generalities, his observations aimed at grasping the general connection between the events are constantly interlaced with digressions on the most varied of subjects, so that the reader finds it difficult to follow the underlying thread (see Adelung's criticism, below, Sect. 9.3.5). Furthermore, the overemphasized connection between historical and political conditions and philosophical ideas does not go much beyond the declared principle: the two kinds of history seem to be juxtaposed rather than related to each other, which results in a fragmentary and uncoordinated progression of each historical perspective. Tiedemann tried to solve the problems arising from these interrelations by granting the history of philosophical ideas its own autonomous

development with respect to political history, thus safeguarding its specificity, but casting doubt on the assumption, highly valuable in Meiners' view and partly shared by Tiedemann himself, of the historical conditioning of systems.

**9.2.6** On Meiners' life: C. G. Heyne, 'Memoria Ch. Meiners', in *Comm. Societatis Regiae Scientiarum Gott. recentiores*, vol. I ad an. 1808–1811 (Göttingen, 1811), pp. 1–18; Pütter, *Versuch einer akademischen Gelehrten-Geschichte*, II, pp. 176–179; F. Saalfeld, *Geschichte der Universität Göttingen in dem Zeitraume vom 1788 bis 1820* (Hannover, 1820), pp. 105–115; Meusel, V, pp. 133–145; X, pp. 270–271; XIII, pp. 531–532; XVIII, p. 660; Jöcher/Erg., IV, pp. 1241–1252; Franck, IV, pp. 191–193; Gumposch, pp. 235–236; von Selle, *Die Georg-August Universität*, pp. 177–178; ADB, XXI, pp. 224–226; DECGPh, pp. 773–781.

On his historical and ethnographical works: H. Wenzel, *Ch. Meiners als Religionshistoriker* (Frankfurt a. O., 1917); A. Ihle, *Ch. Meiners und die Völkerkunde* (Göttingen, 1931); Wundt, pp. 285–86; S. Moravia, *La scienza dell'uomo nel Settecento* (Bari, 1970), pp. 209–10; Marino, pp. 27–29, 103–113, and 166–169; F. Lotter, 'Ch. Meiners und die Lehre von den unterschiedlichen Wertigkeiten des Menschenrassen', in *Geschichtswissenschaft in Göttingen*, H. Boockmann and H. Wellenreuther eds. (Göttingen, 1987), pp. 30–75; F.W.P. Dougherthy, 'Ch. Meiners und Johann Friedrich Blumenbach im Streit um den Begriff der Menschenrasse', in *Die Natur des Menschen*, G. Mann and F. Dumont eds. (Stuttgart, 1990), pp. 89–111; S. Vetter, *Wissenschaftlicher Reduktion und die Rassentheorie in Ch. Meiners. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der verlorenen Metaphysik in der Anthropologie* (Aachen-Mainz, 1997); U. Thiel, 'Varieties of inner sense. Two pre-Kantian theories', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, LXXIX (1997), no. 1, pp. 58–79; D. Dahlmann, "'Grobe Sinnlichkeit" und "eiserne Körper". Der Göttinger Philosoph, Kulturhistoriker und Völkerkundler Ch. Meiners über Russland am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts', in *Die Kenntniss Russlands im deutschsprachigen Raum im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. D. Dahlmann (Bonn, 2006), pp. 229–245; M. Gierl, 'Ch. Meiners Geschichte der Menschheit und Göttinger Universalgeschichte. Rasse und Nation als Politisierung der deutschen Aufklärung', in *Die Wissenschaft von Menschen in Göttingen um 1800. Wissenschaftliche Praktiken, institutionelle Geographie, europäische Netzwerke*, H. E. Bödeker, Ph. Böttgen, and M. Espagne eds. (Göttingen, 2008), pp. 419–433.

Reviews of Meiners' works on the history of philosophy in eighteenth-century reviews: GGZ, 1776 (no. 10), pp. 73–77; TM, 1776 (no. 4), pp. 186–88; NPhL, 1780 (no. 4), pp. 130–172; AB, 1780 (no. 18), pp. 499–514; GA, 1781 (no. 72), pp. 577–580; GGZ, 1782 (no. 58), pp. 479–485; GGZ, 1782 (no. 59), pp. 487–489; ADBibl., XLVIII/2 (1782), pp. 519–527; ADBibl., LV/2 (1783), pp. 502–510; ADBibl., 'Anhang von 37. bis 52. Bd.' (1785), pp. 1237–1243; JE, V (1783), p. 548; GA, no. 7 (1783), pp. 69–71; ADBibl., LXXX/1 (1788), pp. 131–134; ADBibl., CVI/2 (1791), pp. 560–561; GA, LXVIII (1791), pp. 681–682; OALZ, no. 11 (1792), cols 173–74; ALZ, no. 211 (1799), cols 25–26; ALZ, no. 161 (1801), cols 497–504.

Contemporary judgements on his work as a historian of philosophy: W.G. Tenne-mann, 'Uebersicht des Vorzüglichstens, was für die Geschichte der Philosophie seit

1780 geleistet worden', PhJ, III (1795), p. 335; VII (1797), pp. 67, 76, 86, and 89; Ernesti, p. 104; Buhle, I, p. 6; Tennemann, I, pp. LXXVII and LXXVIII; Degérando, I, pp. 163, 165; Carus, pp. 84–85.

On Meiners and the historiography of philosophy: Freyer, pp. 59 and 63; Braun, pp. 173–177; Schneider, pp. 42, 82, 86, 101, 111, and 134–135; Varani, pp. 352–362 (on Neoplatonism); F. Michael, 'Der Neuplatonismus in den philosophiehistorischen Arbeiten der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts', in *Platonismus im Idealismus. Die platonische Tradition in der klassischen deutsche Philosophie*, B. Mojsisch and O.F. Summerell eds. (Munich and Leipzig, 2003; repr. Berlin, 2011), pp. 19–31; G. Piaia, 'Neoplatonismo: genesi di una categoria storico-filosofica', in Id., *Talete in Parnaso. La storia dei filosofi e le belle lettere* (Padua, 2013), pp. 243–253 (252–253).

### 9.3 Johann Christoph Adelung (1732–1806)

#### *Geschichte der Philosophie für Liebhaber*

**9.3.1** Born in Spantekow, near Anklam in Pommern, on 8th August, 1732, Adelung was a famous linguist of his time; while his fame subsequently diminished, he remains important today in representing a link between the Enlightenment linguistics proposed by Gottsched and the romantic linguistics of the brothers Grimm. He was a pupil of Siegmund Jakob Baumgarten at the Faculty of Theology in Halle, but we do not know whether he concluded his university studies. The other circumstances of his life up until 1765 are largely unknown. He initially worked in Erfurt as a teacher at the local gymnasium, and from 1763 as a private teacher in Leipzig and as a librarian in Gotha. Returning to Leipzig in 1765, he earned his living by working as a translator of French and English books and on the editorial board of journals such as the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* edited by Nicolai. While editing the reprint of Gottsched's dictionary for the Leipzig publisher Breitkopf, Adelung embarked on the vocational study of Germanic philology, linguistics, and grammar; from 1765 to 1787 he published his major works in this field, which earned him such renown that in 1787 he was appointed librarian in the Electorate library of Dresden. The Prussian minister of education, Karl Abraham von Zedlitz, to whom Kant had dedicated his *Critique of Pure Reason*, appointed him to create a German grammar to be used as a basic textbook for teaching the German language in primary and secondary schools. He died in Dresden on 10th September, 1806.

**9.3.2** Since it is not possible to list all the works in Adelung's literary production here (cf. Strohbach, *Adelung*, pp. 8–35), we will present the guidelines of his research and his major works. The field in which Adelung earned greatest esteem was linguistics, and within this discipline, his most famous work was certainly the *Versuch eines vollständigen grammatisch-kritischen Wörterbuches der hochdeutschen Mundart, mit beständiger Vergleichung der übrigen Mundarten*,

*besonders aber der oberdeutschen* (Leipzig, 1774–1786, 5 vols; other editions: Brünn, 1788; Leipzig, 1793–1801; Vienna, 1793–1796; Vienna, 1811; a compendium was also created: *Auszug aus dem grammatisch-kritischen Wörterbuch der hochdeutschen Mundart*, Leipzig, 1793–1802, 4 vols). During the nineteenth century, around ten new editions of this work were produced, with corrections and additions; and shortly afterwards a French translation (Mannheim, 1782, 2 vols) and an Italian translation (Weissenfels and Leipzig, 1790–1791, 2 vols) appeared. The purpose of Adelung's dictionary was to put an end to linguistic anarchy by choosing a definite model for the German language, identified not on the basis of literary criteria but on ethnic and geographic considerations: the German of Lower Saxony (*hochdeutsch*) was halfway between the German spoken in the Alps (*oberdeutsch*) and that spoken on the Baltic coast (*niederdeutsch*); moreover, in terms of population density, economic welfare, and cultural level, Saxony was more advanced than the other German regions.

The other work which profoundly influenced the development of the German language was the grammar commissioned by minister von Zedlitz: *Deutsche Sprachlehre. Zum Gebrauch der Schulen in den Königl. Preuss. Landen* (Berlin, 1781); *Auszug aus der deutschen Sprachlehre für Schulen* (Berlin, 1781). As an introduction to this grammar, Adelung wrote the essay *Ueber die Geschichte der deutschen Sprache, über deutsche Mundarten und deutsche Sprachlehre* (Leipzig, 1781), in which he drew an analogy between the evolution of language and the cultural development of a people. This explains Adelung's interest in Old German and Nordic literature as well as ancient sagas and popular legends, which he considered to demonstrate the first stage of linguistic evolution: *Jacob Püterich von Reicherzhausen. Ein kleiner Beytrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtkunst im schwäbischen Zeitalter* (Leipzig, 1788); 'Ueber den Rolands-Gesang', NTM, June 1805, pp. 82–104; 'Ueber den Ossian', NTM, May 1806, pp. 31–52; June 1806, pp. 116–145; *Aelteste Geschichte der Deutschen, ihrer Sprache und Litteratur, bis zur Völkerwanderung*, (Leipzig, 1806).

In addition to his writings on Germanic philology (among which the most important are: *Ueber den Ursprung der Sprache, und Bau der Wörter besonders der Deutschen. Ein Versuch*, Leipzig, 1781; *Grundsätze der deutschen Orthographie*, Leipzig, 1782; *Ueber den deutschen Styl*, Berlin, 1785) let us mention an outstanding work in the field of comparative linguistics: *Mithridates oder allgemeine Sprachenkunde mit dem Vater Unser als Sprachprobe in bey nahe fünfhundert Sprachen und Mundarten* (Berlin, 1806), later followed by three further posthumous volumes edited by Johann Severin Vater (in all 4 vols, Berlin, 1806–1817). One of the main theories put forward by Adelung to explain the different degree of refinement of the various languages is the conformity of language with reason, namely, the parallel development of linguistic ability and the spiritual (and cultural) faculties of man: "Indeed, language and reason arise and develop from each other. Both start from obscure impressions and gradually proceed towards clear concepts. All of nature flows towards the firstborn son of time: he sees, feels, and hears everything, but only confusedly. Impressions would go unnoticed and would disappear like an image in water if there were no means to preserve them. This

means is represented by sound and its persistence through the voice. This is the raft on which the trembling savage throws himself confidently into the rushing river; we shall see how it subsequently turns into a hundred-gun ship. This certainly does" (*Mithridates*, I, p. v).

The work just mentioned clearly shows the influence of Herder's linguistic theory, going beyond the position which was most widely held during the Enlightenment. Language has no divine origin but neither does it derive from social convention, as Gottsched had claimed, nor is it the result of the "animal and inferior" powers of man, as was maintained by the French materialists. Language is the result of the concurrence of the "spiritual" powers, as was maintained by Herder, who from this premise inferred the conformity of the history of language with the history of cultural development and human civilization. In *Versuch einer Geschichte der Cultur des menschlichen Geschlechts* (Leipzig, 1782), Adelung faithfully repropounded Herder's doctrine, even using the same words: "What was language originally if not the perceptible expression of our clear representations and sensations? [...] Language and knowledge are most closely related, and without any clear knowledge no perceptible language takes place. What was the language like that God conveyed, infused, revealed, or how else shall we say, to the first man? It was undoubtedly in accordance with man's knowledge, since we do not want the first man to be a parrot who talked about things of which he had and could have no idea" (*Versuch einer Geschichte der Cultur*, quoted in Strohbach, *Adelung*, p. 102). In this work, the interpretation of the course of humanity as an organic development is also taken from Herder's philosophy of history. Adelung does not idealize the primitive age, the infancy of mankind, which according to Herder corresponds to the golden age; rather, for Adelung, primitive man remains tied to ignorance and, as such, cannot constitute a model for the more advanced ages. Human history is divided into eight ages, which are divided as follows: up to the Flood (man in embryo), up to Moses (man as an infant), from Moses to the Greeks (man as a child), the Greeks (young man), the Romans (adult man), from the barbarian invasions to the Crusades (man engages in physical occupations), from the Crusades to the fifteenth century (man embellishes his environment), and from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth (man fully enjoys the *Aufklärung*).

Adelung wrote several works of political, diplomatic, and military history, such as the weighty *Pragmatische Staatsgeschichte Europens von dem Ableben Kaiser Carls 6. an bis auf die gegenwärtigen Zeiten* (Gotha, 1762–1769, 9 vols). We will dwell a little longer on his writings on cultural history, which have greater affinity with the history of philosophy. Let us mention two constant aspects of this production: first of all, the focus on scientific and geographical discoveries as well as a description of natural history; and in the second place, the efforts made by Adelung, as an Enlightenment intellectual, to disseminate the knowledge of these discoveries in order to extend the *Aufklärung* and defend it against the danger of reverting to barbarism, superstition, and a pseudo-culture which, at that time, was still fostered by magic, astrology, and prejudices based on ignorance. Here is a partial list of this production: *Allgemeine Geschichte der Welt und Natur, der Völker, der Staaten, der Kirche, der Wissenschaften und Künste* (Berlin, 1765–1767, 2 vols); *Geschichte der*



*Schiffahrten und Versuche, welche zur Entdeckung des nordöstlichen Weges nach Japan und China von verschiedenen Nationen unternommen worden. Zur Behufe der Erdbeschreibung und Naturgeschichte dieser Gegenden* (Halle, 1768); *Kurzer Begriff menschlicher Fertigkeiten und Kenntnisse so fern sie auf Erwerbung des Unterhalts, auf Vergnügen, auf Wissenschaft und auf Regierung der Gesellschaft abzielen* (Leipzig, 1778–1781, 4 vols); *Beyträge zur bürgerlichen Geschichte, zur Geschichte der Cultur, zur Naturgeschichte, Naturlehre und dem Feldbaue. Aus den Schriften der Kaiserlich-königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Brüssel* (Leipzig, 1783).

Adelung's historical, political, and cultural interests are the frame of reference for his history of philosophy: *Geschichte der Philosophie für Liebhaber* (Leipzig: bey Johann Friedrich Junius, 1786, vols I and II, and 1787, vol. III). The first edition of the work was published anonymously, and other editions followed in 1800, 1809, 1810. This work had no erudite aims, nor was it intended to be a school manual; it is a history of philosophy written for the unprofessional reader, for the "amateur". This explains the meaning of the term *Liebhaber*: not the scholar, but the cultivated, "enlightened" (*aufgeklärten*) man. The work is characterized by the absence of the usual apparatus of footnotes, because what matters is not so much an in-depth historical and philological study as the presentation of historiographical information, with special attention to the general vision, the tendencies common to the philosophy of a period as a whole, and the overall evolution through the centuries, without lingering over lists of doctrines and commenting on them. Although Adelung acknowledges Brucker's *Historia critica* as his primary source, he believes that, thanks to his methodological choices, he has produced an original work which fulfils a specific and particular purpose: promoting the diffusion of the philosophical spirit and the *Aufklärung*.

Finally, let us mention a periodical writing published at the same time as the history of philosophy and in many ways similar to it: *Geschichte der menschlichen Narrheit, oder Lebensbeschreibungen berühmter Schwarzkünstler, Goldmacher, Teufelsbanner, Zeichen- und Liniendeuter, Schwärmer, Wahrsager und anderer philosophischer Unholden* (Leipzig, 1785–1789, 7 vols; the eighth volume was added in 1799, with its title slightly modified: *Gallerie der neuen Propheten, apokalyptischen Träumer, Geisterseher und Revolutionsprediger. Ein Beytrag zur Geschichte der menschlichen Narrheit*). Here Adelung deals with many authors who are also included in his history of philosophy: Amos Comenius, Giordano Bruno, Jakob Böhme, Tommaso Campanella, F.M. Van Helmont, and Theophrastus Paracelsus. These men claimed to be great philosophers, but in reality they worked against philosophy and sound reason. Adelung calls them evil spirits (*Unholde*), "because I do not know any other word to convey better the general character of such abundant nonsense" (I, 'Vorrede'). Adelung accompanies this collection of anecdotes and lively biographies with a series of reflections which, according to him, may prove helpful in an epoch that yearns for fictional works, in order to warn the mind against such absurd, but not harmless, prejudices and beliefs.

**9.3.3** In the 'Einleitung' to the *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Adelung addresses some preliminary problems: the essence, origin, and object of philosophy as well as its use. Except for a few occasional observations, he does not provide a theoretical analysis of the concept and methods of the historiography of philosophy. He follows the same lines as Heumann and Brucker: in order to understand the essence of philosophy we have to ignore the rather heterogeneous outer form it has taken through the centuries, and grasp the common elements in the definition of philosophy. "In all ages, the term philosophy has embraced the store of general concepts, necessary to social life, which concern the properties and origin of things" (*Geschichte der Philosophie*, I, p. 4:). As Adelung then explains, there are three essential components of philosophy: the tool (the generality of concepts), the object (the nature of things), and finally the purpose (use).

On the basis of empirical epistemology, Adelung attributes all concepts with a sensible origin. Accumulating experiences enables man – who is capable of abstraction – to envisage representations which can be referred to several individuals and therefore create increasingly general concepts, up to the idea of being. The more general the concept, the more abstract it is, that is to say, further from experience. Concepts are merely the tool of philosophy, "with which philosophy tries to penetrate into the nature of surrounding things, explain their properties, and trace their origin" (I, p. 7). The object of philosophy is therefore the nature of things, their property and their origin. The third element of philosophy is its use: in general, philosophy has a social purpose and should not only give rise to personal enjoyment but also become good for society.

The problem of truth is central to Adelung's epistemology, since he makes philosophy consist in the process of generalization by the intellect and attributes an empirical origin to knowledge. The definition of truth is the traditional one: "accordance between our judgement and the thing itself" (I, p. 10), which is a concept that involves a relation between two terms: judgement (the intellect) and thing. The position held by Adelung is of a realistic character: the criterion of truth lies in the object, not in the subject. For this reason, after distinguishing between sensible and non-sensible objects, Adelung asserts that a perfect correspondence of sense with thing exists only with reference to sensible objects; indeed, the thing is just as it appears to the sense. We have an unacceptable degree of scepticism when it questions the certainty of sensible knowledge, as Hume seems to do; sense merely ascertains the true and immutable characteristics of things. By contrast, scepticism applies to the knowledge of objects lying beyond experience; this is a world which is unknown to us, or rather a world not yet known, because it is a world made up of bodies, which man, by refining and perfecting his tools of observation, gradually comes to know. Philosophical knowledge is effective insofar as it preserves a link with the empirical origin of its concepts: "All abstract concepts were originally concrete, hence they designate something clear and intuitive. [...] It follows that all our knowledge is basically sensible or intuitive, therefore we have no grounds for boasting of our abstract concepts and must be very cautious in applying them to objects with a non-corporeal form, which they may suit in a very imperfect way" (I, pp. 12–13).

If scepticism means that man is denied the possibility of knowing truth in any way, while dogmatism grants an absolute value to the judgements formulated by the intellect, then the philosopher must follow a middle way: he must be aware of the limitations of the intellect but also be certain that “the range of action of the latter remains nevertheless always wide enough to apprehend and develop all that which is necessary in social life; the rest is concealed from us by an impenetrable curtain, of which we can certainly discover individual threads here and there, but we would be wrong if we considered these threads to be what is concealed by the curtain” (I, p. 14). If Hume had not radicalized his scepticism by formulating a criticism of the concept of substance, the middle way indicated by Adelung might be the experimental or Newtonian scepticism professed by Hume. On the contrary, it is quite clear how far Adelung’s middle way is from the middle course spoken of by Kant, which Adelung did however appreciate when he denied the possibility of metaphysics. Philosophy is not the science of reason, it does not lay down the *a priori*, necessary conditions of experience, but addresses an understanding of reality by means of hypotheses and plausible theories which require experimental verification.

Philosophy is therefore, by its very nature, changeable and temporary, and only those doctrines, or parts of them, which refer to objects established through experience are immutable. By contrast, the attempt to provide an exhaustive explanation of reality, which is proper to a philosophy that takes the form of a system, introduces – in addition to some acquired truths – theories which are mere hypotheses. Adelung mentions Leibniz’s monads, for example, which are destined to be surpassed thanks to the development and progress of experiment. For this reason Adelung sides with eclecticism, which not only contrasts with dogmatism and sectarianism, as in Christian Thomasius and Brucker, but also with the spirit of system, according to the definition given by the *Encyclopédie*: “If systematic philosophy runs into this error, then eclectic philosophy becomes infinitely preferable to it, since eclectic philosophy distinguishes accurately between truth and hypothesis, grasps truth where it effectively is and does not try to simulate any system, if this is not permitted by the nature of things. The worth of philosophy fortunately does not depend upon these or on countless other hypotheses, but upon its demonstrable truths, and we should certainly not be ashamed to acknowledge with sincerity the limitations of our intellect, since they constitute the essence of man and are therefore grounded in the aims and will of his creator” (I, p. 17).

Keeping in view this concept of ‘philosophy’, Adelung then lists the disciplines which comprise it. Natural history and astronomy are preliminary sciences, because they increase the data of experience. By contrast, mathematics is not a philosophical science, strictly speaking, but a related science; like philosophy, it makes use of general concepts, which, however, are such as to refer not to the qualities of things but to their quantity. Mathematics, which concerns magnitude – a property which falls immediately into the realm of sense – precedes philosophy and at the same time is an introduction to it, thus accustomising the intellect to forming concepts and reasoning. There are two philosophical disciplines as such: logic and physics. The former includes both formal logic, which studies the modes of reasoning, and

(above all) epistemology, which studies the process of knowledge and presupposes, in turn, the study of man and his faculties – anthropology. But logic is still an instrumental science, and so physics is the only true philosophical science: it has the world of bodies as its object and has an immediate use for the life of man. Adelung considers the other disciplines usually contained within the context of philosophy to be extraneous to it, or he admits them in a very limited sense: natural theology, for example, is included in philosophy as an appendix to physics, as an answer to the question concerning the origin of things which leads man to demonstrate the existence of the only God; but the divine essence, providence, and the other themes pertaining to theology are inadmissible on a rational plane because they lie outside the sphere of experience. As to ontology, since it represents the highest degree of abstraction, it constitutes obscure knowledge, which lacks solidity and usefulness.

Significant, finally, is Adelung's mistrust of pneumatology and psychology, two sciences – especially the latter – which aroused great interest at the time. In this regard, Adelung differs from the popular philosophers, but he comes closer to them, however, regarding the definition and purposes of philosophy: whereas Feder, Meiners, and Tiedemann had made psychology into the supreme philosophical science, Adelung defines it as an illusory science, based on ignorance and destined to disappear with the progress of physical science: "The most positive proof demonstrating this fact is the uncertainty that imbues the human intellect concerning its very essence and soul, of which it represents the primary power. By experience, it knows that there is something in man which has the power of thinking and willing, two phenomena which are completely different from the forces known in the corporeal world and which cannot be explained by means of them. He therefore concludes that, besides the body, there must be in man an incorporeal essence which is different from the body and which he terms 'soul', whose nature and properties he then tries to guess, and to apply what he has found, or believes he has found, to all the other spirits outside his soul, although he cannot be convinced of their existence except by means of hypothetical reasoning. Thus psychology, the doctrine of the human soul, and pneumatology, the doctrine of the essence and properties of the spirit, arose; and the more these two sciences lost supremacy, the more deeply man has been able to penetrate the powers and properties of the corporeal world" (I, pp. 25–26).

Examining the use of philosophy eventually leads to a deeper analysis of one of the issues typical of Adelung's historiography, that concerning the "philosophical spirit" (*philosophischer Geist*) and the "Enlightenment" (*Aufklärung*), which he frequently considers to be synonymous with "culture" (*Cultur*). In the first place, Adelung attempts to define the context within which philosophy exerts its influence, and he asks whether philosophy by itself is enough to guide man in life. The answer is basically negative, since philosophy is ineffective with respect to those acts which depend upon one's judgement or free will; in addition, language, usage, and customs originated before philosophy and culture and express the connection and unity of a nation: "Philosophy is a work of the intellect; this represents the principal higher power of the soul and bears no analogy at all with the inferior [powers]. The latter must be guided by something which is analogous to them and must affect not so much the intellect as sense, imagination, and feelings" (I, p. 34). A more influential

function for social life, therefore, is carried out by positive law, whose source lies in the Church and State and which has the aim of guiding the lower classes of society; the *Aufklärung* does not seem not to regard these classes: "To enlighten the lower-class man – so as to enable him to recognize the force of positive law – means to transfer him, from his very youth, to the higher classes; what would then become the lower-class people, the most active and therefore most necessary part of all civil society?" (I, p. 39).

Besides this statement, which would seem to lead to a closed and elitist conception of culture, Adelung introduces and extends the concept of "philosophical spirit", which is synonymous with *Aufklärung* and therefore does not concern the individual but the people, the mass of citizens. It is in the "philosophical spirit" that the social use of philosophy becomes a reality, whereas philosophy as such is always elitist, the work undertaken by a minority, since it requires patience, effort, time, and the ability – by means of abstraction – to leave out the particular conditions of the surrounding world. The concept of *Aufklärung* has instead a greater dimension than the concept of philosophy; the latter is not even the primary cause of the former. The most important factors explaining the appearance of the philosophical spirit are of an ethnic, economic, and geographical kind: environment, population density, and wealth. In particular, population density favours the *Aufklärung* in two ways: by fostering an accumulation and exchange of experiences and by awakening intelligence in its search for the means to meet man's various needs. Adelung is so convinced of the effectiveness of this condition that he states it as a general law: "A nation in which 4,000 people are concentrated in a square mile will have four times more enlightenment than another nation in which only 1,000 people live in the same space" (I, p. 44). The other factors, among which is philosophy, depend upon this and are the following, in order: the development of art, economic welfare, a sound school philosophy, and the rapid circulation of ideas.

In order to understand Adelung's uncertainty in establishing the relationship between philosophy and the Enlightenment, in which philosophy is at times the cause and at other times the effect, we have to bear in mind the circumstances in which he was writing (on the eve of the French Revolution) as well as his personal political position, which was monarchic and basically elitist. However, the Enlightenment must not be considered as a movement addressed exclusively to a limited social category; by its very nature, the philosophical spirit concerns the citizens as a whole. At most, philosophy is elitist because it involves idleness and uncommon intellectual qualities. This means that not everyone can be a philosopher, but everyone must be "enlightened" by philosophy, with no claim to transform the multitude of citizens into a multitude of philosophers, which can be dangerous on a social level and harmful to morals too, because it calls into question the positive laws of religion, which curb the instincts. Adelung carefully avoids an unconditional praise of the *Aufklärung*, and indeed lists its possible misuses, which consist essentially in the arrogance of identifying the Enlightenment with philosophy and in the claim to eradicate religion. From a political point of view, too, the use of the Enlightenment must be clearly limited: the philosopher rightfully demands freedom of thought, but this has nothing to do with civil liberty (*bürgerliche Freyheit*). Adelung struggles

to demonstrate that this second type of liberty must not be considered among the conditions favouring the Enlightenment. Experience teaches us that there has always been more *Aufklärung* in well-ordered monarchies than in free republics; indeed, the *Aufklärung* – and here Adelung gives no examples but probably has in mind the history of Greece and Rome – has always helped in the transition from a republican constitution to a monarchy.

The *Aufklärung* of which Adelung intends to be a representative is fundamentally a very moderate movement, not radical and with no abstract ideals; it is suited to a monarchical constitution, respectful of religious orthodoxy, and in accordance with “sound” school philosophy. Nevertheless, philosophy has its own value and significance only if it affects the intellectual “enlightenment” of the people. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that, among the philosophers of the modern age, Adelung attributes greater merits to Christian Thomasius and Christian Wolff than to Descartes, Leibniz, and Newton, because the former advocated the diffusion of enlightened thought without losing themselves in speculation. The interest in the philosophical spirit that developed during the different epochs was to represent a steady point of reference in Adelung’s history of philosophy; this is what truly distinguishes his historiography from previous and contemporary historiography and justifies his decision to provide a *Geschichte der Philosophie für Liebhaber*.

### 9.3.4 *Geschichte der Philosophie für Liebhaber*

**9.3.4.1** The work was published in three volumes between 1786 and 1787 and consists of a total of about 1,500 pages. After the dedication and the ‘Vorrede’, the first volume begins with a theoretical discussion: ‘Erklärung der Philosophie, ihre Eintheilung, ihr Ursprung, ihr Gegenstand und Nutzen’ (I, pp. 3–51). The work as a whole is divided into five parts, corresponding to the five periods of the history of philosophy: 1. ‘Die Philosophie im Keimen’ (I, pp. 52–200); 2. ‘Die Philosophie unter den Griechen’ (I, pp. 201–544; II, pp. 3–105); 3. ‘Geschichte der Philosophie unter der Herrschaft der Römer bis auf das achte Jahrhundert’ (II, pp. 106–398); 4. ‘Geschichte der Philosophie in dem Mittlern Zeitalter’ (II, pp. 399–498; III, pp. 3–154); 5. ‘Geschichte der Philosophie in den neuern Zeiten’ (III, pp. 155–519). Each part consists of various chapters, which follow different criteria: Oriental philosophy is subdivided into nations, Greek thought into schools, the Roman and medieval period into churches, and the modern age again into schools. This partition of the subject matter, which the author derives from the *Historia critica*, renders the distribution of the philosophers in the Roman age rather complicated: the chapters deal with diverse subjects and are too long, as in the case of the second chapter, devoted to pagan philosophy (II, pp. 131–274), while the subdivision into schools corresponds here with the various sections of the chapter.

Each part is preceded by an ‘Einleitung’, and the introduction is generally paralleled by a conclusion that seeks to determine the common elements present in the thought of each period. At times the conclusion takes up a whole chapter, as

in the case of the *allgemeine Anmerkungen* on Oriental philosophy (I, pp. 173–200) and Greek thought (II, pp. 91–105); at other times the conclusion is incorporated into the chapters, more precisely into the final paragraphs. The conclusion to the three volumes, consisting of a more precise definition of the path followed by philosophical speculation and its results, can be considered as corresponding to the last but one chapter of the work: ‘Gegenwärtiger Zustand der Philosophie’ (III, pp. 425–465). Each period ends with a chapter devoted to the history of mathematics, whereas the “philosophical spirit” is dealt with within the chapters, generally in the final paragraphs. Worth mentioning, finally, is the extensive ‘Vorrede’ to the third volume, where the author clarifies and justifies the methodology he has adopted, engaging in a polemic against two reviews which, to his mind, had belittled the originality of his work, judging it as if it were a compendium of the *Historia critica*.

**9.3.4.2** As mentioned above, there are five ages in the history of philosophy: the origin of philosophy (the East); the Greeks; philosophy during the Roman age up to the eighth century; the Middle Ages; and the modern age. Compared with Brucker, we can observe, on one hand, a simplified division of the historiographical subject matter and, on the other, a deviation from the scheme of periodization taken from ecclesiastical history: the Flood, the birth of Christ, and the Protestant Reformation no longer represent the decisive moments, and the new criteria adopted are either ethnic and political factors (Eastern peoples – Greeks, the formation and fall of the Roman Empire) or important changes that took place within the very history of philosophy (the Renaissance and the rise of natural science).

The first period covers many centuries, about half of human history “as it is known to us”; biblical chronology is rejected because, according to the author, it does not explain the advance of culture and the astronomical discoveries, which were indeed notable even 3,000 years before Christ, as in the case of the solar calendar. The peoples of the East are not all considered equally important: four of them – the Indians, Persians, Babylonians (among whom the Chaldeans represent the caste of the learned), and the Egyptians – are outstanding because they developed their culture autonomously, whereas the others – the Arabs, Phoenicians, Thracians, etc. – acquired their knowledge from the former. As for the Hebrews, they were a rough and ignorant people, absolutely insignificant from a cultural and philosophical point of view.

The second period is taken up by the Greeks and, in its first millennium, was not distinct from Eastern speculation; a change took place about 600–500 BC with the almost contemporaneous appearance of the Ionian, Pythagorean, and Eleatic schools, which constitute the beginning of Greek philosophy strictly speaking, “which was for almost 2,000 years the only philosophy known and still today represents a large part of our knowledge” (I, p. 208). The causes for this change were above all of a geographical and historical character. A decisive factor was the mild climate, more suitable to spiritual activity, and this resulted in the particular disposition of the Greek people, active, lively, and resourceful. The growing population density encouraged the development of commerce, which affected culture in two ways: by expanding the range of experiences and by creating wealth and the possibility of “leisure”. But the main cause was the free constitution

of the Greek people, not in the sense of political or civil liberty, but of freedom from the constraints of caste to which the sciences were subjected in the East. This determined the character of Greek philosophy, clearly structured into different schools, totally oriented towards debate and polemic, always receptive to novelty and therefore capable of progressing.

Extrinsically, the divisions of Greek philosophy reflect the traditional classification into schools; but within this classification, a criterion of a speculative nature is adopted: on one hand, Adelung groups together those schools which, with various formulations, took up the Oriental system based on emanation (the Ionians, Pythagoreans, early Eleatics, Socrates and Socratics, Platonists, and Stoics); on the other, he groups together the schools which rejected this system (the later Eleatics, namely Leucippus and Democritus, then the Sophists and the Epicureans); in the middle he places the school that attempted to mediate (the Aristotelians) and the school that rejected all dogmatic philosophy (the Sceptics).

The third period embraces the Roman age up to the eighth century. In this age, philosophical thought showed no originality, not so much because the Greeks had exhausted the powers of the human intellect, as because it was not possible to go any further on the path they had taken, that of abstraction. It was necessary to follow the other path, that of observation, which was still unknown to philosophy but not to mathematics and medicine, which in fact made some progress in this direction: “what the philosophers of this period could do was nothing but chew all the preceding philosophical systems over and over again, or connect them to one another or to the ancient and unrefined concepts of emanation, or even to the predominant popular religion, so as to satisfy, at least in this way, the tendency to novelty which is so natural in the human spirit” (II, p. 107). The typical system of the period is Neoplatonism, which – as in Brucker – is here called *eklektische Philosophie* and is accused of strangeness, eccentricity, and absurdity, but especially of supporting and encouraging superstition.

The fourth period extends from the eighth century to the revival of the sciences. This period was initially dominated by ignorance, then by the corruption of philosophy, to the point that it deserves the title of “barbarian epoch”. Adelung points out a difference in periodization between the history of philosophy and political history. The Middle Ages, as a political category, starts with the barbarian invasions and it can be dated by the subdivision of the Empire carried out by Theodosius (395 CE), because it was at that moment that the civilization which gravitated around Rome came to an end. The centre of philosophy, however, had always been the East, then Greece, and finally Alexandria, whose conquest by the Arabs marks the end of ancient philosophy and the beginning of medieval philosophy. There is one more difference between East and West: in the West philosophy was totally forgotten and its place was taken by religion, whereas in the East it persisted but degenerated into sterile repetition and extreme frivolousness. The Middle Ages for the West as a whole was a period of non-culture, even of philosophical barbarism. Indeed, Scholastic philosophy, which is peculiar to that age, adopted but at the same time corrupted Aristotelian philosophy, subjecting it to theology and giving pre-eminence to dialectics. The tripartition of Scholasticism is



the traditional one: from Abelard to Albert the Great, from Albert to Peter of Abano, and from Durandus of Saint-Pourçain to the Reformation.

The fifth period starts with the revival of letters. The elements behind this rebirth already existed in the Middle Ages: population growth, the Crusades, and the recovery of commerce, in particular the formation of an intermediate class between the nobility and the serfs, the class of free citizens (*der Stand der freyen Bürger*). The development of culture was engendered by this class: "During the previous period, the arrogance of the nobility and the clergy had obliged the princes to rely on free citizens and therefore to privilege the towns. Since these were endowed with the principal forms of freedom, the surplus population – by its nature detached from any other class – gathered in them; hence a more sizeable middle class originated, which in all ages has proved to be the most beneficial for culture, and since in the preceding period – as well as in the current one – it represented the real centre of all intellectual activity, it naturally became the central point of the Enlightenment and of culture" (III, pp. 159–160). The transition towards the new period was influenced by other favourable circumstances: an increase in the number of schools and the foundation of universities, the rise of national literatures, the emigration of the Greeks to Italy, and the invention of printing. Philosophy, as the "firstborn daughter of reason" (III, p. 167), was the first to feel these influences, but could be delivered from its previous mistakes only gradually. The elevation of ancient thought had conditioned it negatively and for a long time it continued to move within the limits of Greek speculation. There were two "internal" occurrences which steered it onto the right path: the study of nature, which favoured observation over speculation, and the Lutheran Reformation which freed the human spirit from subjection to the principle of authority. The unfolding of modern philosophy followed the steps already shown by Brucker. First came the forerunners (*die Vorläufer*), the representatives of Italian and European Humanism (Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Bruni, Poliziano, [...] Erasmus, Vives, and Melancthon), then the restorers of the Greek schools: the Aristotelians, Pantheists (Ionians, Stoics, Platonists-Pythagoreans-Cabbalists, Mosaicists, Theosophists, Spinoza), the Eleatics, Sceptics (from F. Sánchez to D. Hume), and finally the representatives of eclectic philosophy: Bacon, Hobbes, Descartes, Ch. Thomasius, Leibniz, and Wolff. As for eighteenth-century philosophy, Adelung discusses it with reference to the following disciplines: logic, natural philosophy, metaphysics, and practical philosophy.

Compared with Brucker, some divergences can be noted, not so much in the different distribution of the philosophers (Cardano, Bruno, and Campanella are here included in the sectarians, not in the eclectics), as in a different assessment of the progress made by philosophy. First of all, for Adelung modern philosophy is without doubt not only better than ancient philosophy, but is the only true philosophy, in such a way that the Renaissance, as regards philosophy, is not exactly a rebirth, but a beginning, "the first dawn of the only true philosophy" (III, p. 156). The true philosophy was attained only in the eighteenth century with the widening of the natural sciences: "In conclusion, physics, complete with all its parts, is definitely a gift of modern philosophy, and as soon as it acquired a certain solidity and extent, it began

to teach man to recognize the fallacy of philosophy, which up to that time had been only speculative, and provided it with the first and most vigorous stimulus. There is no doubt that physics was also the most productive source from which the beneficial philosophical spirit derived and with which it started to expand” (III, p. 450).

**9.3.4.3** The first philosophical system of Antiquity, whose definition should be formulated with precision since it was later taken up in various ways and corrected and refined, is ‘emanationism’, through which primitive man attempted to provide an explanation for reality and natural phenomena by using the concept of development (*Entwicklung*), which he obtained from the immediate experience of animal and vegetable life, and which already formed the basis of idolatry: “Education and popular religion had already taught him that each body, though devoid of life, is animated and sustained by a particular spirit associated with it, and that all change in nature is produced by an inferior, subordinate, and invisible being. This was naturally to lead him to deduce the origin of the entire spiritual and corporeal world from only one major, eternal, and incorporeal essence. For some time he was probably satisfied with his persuasion that God is the true and only author of the world; but the ‘philosophical luxury’ was soon to induce him to meditate and ask how this had happened. It probably cost him much effort and labour to think out the idea of how God could have given rise to something which was not, in particular how God could have given rise to rough matter, of which the corporeal world is composed. Eventually, in this case too, nature was to dissipate his bewilderment, and the observation that everything originates from the seed and the germs concealed in nature and propagates with them, was to induce him spontaneously to apply this to the origin of the world and to interpret this origin by means of a development out of the essence of God, which he was unable to conceive of as totally incorporeal. [...] Hence, from idolatry and from unrefined popular concepts there arose the first philosophical system, the famous system of emanation which, thus shaped, served, in turn, as the most powerful support of idolatry” (I, pp. 192–193).

There are no substantial differences between the doctrines elaborated by the Eastern peoples; among these doctrines, Adelung names the immortality of the soul (as a part of the divine essence), astrology, and moral asceticism. These peoples also shared the same type of social organization, which turned philosophy into the profession of a caste, hence providing it with a religious as well as political purpose. The Hebrews are dealt with separately; among them, Adelung finds no philosophy, at least until the time of their return from Babylonia, and then it reveals itself to be a form of Oriental philosophy. Moses was a legislator and a prophet, not a philosopher; indeed, he contrasted the Hebrew religion with the idolatry of the other peoples and the philosophy of emanation on which it was based. This is how Adelung explains the absence of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul from the Old Testament, an observation which, made by Lessing had caused an

outcry.<sup>33</sup> Moses made no mention of this doctrine because it was linked to idolatry: he “therefore preferred, for the time, to renounce a useful doctrine rather than to transmit it to a people which was coarse and imbued with idolatry and thus create an opportunity for its misuse, which subsequently might have easily demolished the whole system it was a part of” (I, p. 167).

The philosophy of emanation constitutes the starting point, diversely elaborated and only partially confuted, of Greek philosophy. The theory of the Greek origin of philosophy, which Heumann had strongly defended and which was now supported by the Kantians but also by Meiners and Tiedemann, is not shared by Adelung. What characterizes Greek thought, inducing Adelung to describe it as “the first true philosophy”, is the ‘form’ that it now takes, when it ceases to be a legacy which must be recognized and accepted and becomes a field of free rational research: “The Greek philosopher wished and was able to think freely; therefore he did not endure the Egyptian yoke for long, a yoke that linked philosophy to religion and made it into a political profession; he collected the experiences made by the other peoples, although without considering them sacred and immutable; on the contrary, he examined them carefully, clearing them of the dust and keeping the wheat, or what he considered to be the wheat, and tried to fill in the gaps with his own reflection. He thus came naturally to follow the only possible path which enabled him to represent philosophy in a splendour up till then unknown; the temperament of the nation, restless, frivolous and always looking for novelty, which rendered it quickly tired of all form of government and of all good institution, revealed itself to be useful since it brought about one of the greatest advantages ever enjoyed by mankind. It is evident that this could not happen all of sudden. Therefore, at the beginning and up to Pythagoras, philosophy still presented totally Oriental features, in Plato the spirit of the East is still perceptible, and only from Aristotle onwards did philosophy attain its special, exquisite Greek form” (I, p. 212).

Among the philosophers of the Ionian school Anaxagoras is worth mentioning, since it was he who diverged most from the system of emanation that Thales and Anaximander had left almost unchanged: he was the first to separate God from matter and to understand the latter as a blend of similar particles. Compared with the interpretation given by Meiners and Tiedemann, the role given to Anaxagoras here within the history of philosophy is not as great: Socrates and Plato were not to follow the same path, but were to take up the system of emanation in the same form as it had been elaborated in the East. The distance from Meiners’ historiography appears even more clearly from Adelung’s judgment on Pythagoras: “To my eyes, Pythagoras is nothing other than an extremely ambitious man, who yearned to exert full power over the whole of Greece or at least a large part of it, and thought that the

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<sup>33</sup>In truth, Lessing had referred to this absence not to deny but to affirm the divine origin of the Old Testament, considered as an “instructive” document appropriate to the degree of development attained by the understanding shown by the Hebrew people “of the time”; cf. G.E. Lessing, *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, in Id., *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. P. Rilla (Berlin and Weimar, 1968), VIII, p. 594.

most suitable way to attain this end was to introduce the closed class of the learned into Greece, as was typical in Asia, and through them rule the world from his desk, like a superior-general of the Jesuits. There is no denying that he carried out this plan with extreme subtlety and skill, and hence he can still be called a great man. [...] However, considering that all the means by which he tried to fulfil his ends were not invented by him but had long been practised all over Asia, we deduce that his greatness should be much reduced. As for his philosophy, here too the original part is very limited, excepting perhaps the way in which he presents concepts, and even this is not totally his own" (I, pp. 261–263).

The Eleatic school, which – like Brucker – Adelung divides into two trends, the metaphysicians and the physicists, departed more decisively from the system of emanation; it dared to "think by itself", and it invented dialectic. Among the metaphysicians, the outstanding figure is Xenophanes, whose doctrines were simply repeated by Parmenides: it was he who created the most coherent formulation of the system of emanation, which led him to distinguish between two classes of philosophical concepts; metaphysical concepts (concerning the essence of things and God) and physical concepts, pertaining to the visible world of bodies. A more in-depth elaboration of this distinction induced the later representatives of the school to abandon the metaphysical system of emanation and build a new system, Atomism. The difference between the two directions does not lie in their method, which continues to be speculative, but in the object examined, which is no longer God but the corporeal world. The accusation of atheism, variously formulated against the ancient Atomists, does not rest on definite testimonies; Adelung accepts as probable the hypothesis that Leucippus and Democritus had admitted Xenophanes' theory of divine essence, except that they did not take it into account when dealing with the process leading to the formation of the corporeal world.

Atomistic philosophy therefore represents a new strain within ancient thought; but this does not mean that it should be overestimated, because its deductions concerning natural reality were nothing more than "a nice metaphysical dream", which is just as abstract as the system of emanationism. Moreover, denying the divine origin of the human soul proved to be harmful on a political and moral level, as is shown by the history of the Sophists, who, by bringing the Eleatic theory onto a social plane, disseminated an "enlightenment" which corrupted morals and overturned the social and political order: "The first consequences of this system were in fact rather deplorable for Greece as well, because they gave way to all sorts of vices and introduced a corruption of morals unknown in Greece up until then, a flaw which was to remain eternally in the character of this nation, otherwise so worthy. Undoubtedly [the Sophists] spread the enlightenment; but an enlightenment which deprives civil society of all the bases on which its solidity and peace are grounded, without giving it anything better in return, is immensely more miserable than its absence" (I, p. 357).

Socrates is repeatedly extolled as "the most virtuous man of his time", "a warm friend and a master of virtue", but his stature as a thinker is not so highly esteemed. His struggle against the Sophists to defend a stable moral and political order was certainly praiseworthy; but, on a philosophical level, this became a restoration of

the Eastern system of emanation, which was not taken as a philosophical doctrine, however, but as a dogma of faith, “more or less as a good Christian accepts the Mosaic history of creation literally, without meditating on it at length” (I, p. 368).

Plato tried to remedy the lack of philosophical effort on the part of his master by preparing a new systemization of emanationistic philosophy. Adelung recognizes the complexity of the sources of Platonic thought (Heraclitus, Socrates, Parmenides, and Pythagoras) and believes that it intended to overcome the mistakes made by the different systems thanks to a new position capable of reconciling the opposite tendencies of emanation and its negation. Yet, the fulfilment of this intention turned into a definite predominance of emanationistic themes, and Adelung describes Platonic philosophy as nothing more than an “embellishment of the system of emanation”. Indeed, its very style, being poetic and metaphorical, and language, being obscure and hermetic, are ‘Oriental’, since Plato, like Pythagoras, wished to address his words to a limited group of initiates. Only Platonic dialectic was Eleatic, whereas his theology, psychology, cosmology, and morals had a fundamentally Pythagorean and Oriental character.

The doctrine of ideas itself, which is central to Plato’s thought because “it constitutes the point on which his whole philosophy is pivoted”, reveals a clear Oriental inspiration: “The divine intellect, *nous* or *logos*, is the first and most excellent emanation of the divine essence, the first and largest thought of God; for everything which is thought by God becomes essence and becomes substance. This almost corresponds to that which, in Persian philosophy, is called Ormusd, the firstborn thought of God, who is also the creator of all things. [...] Ideas deriving from this divine intellect and are nothing other than Zoroaster’s *fires*, which in *Zend-Avesta* are explicitly defined as the thoughts of Ormusd and are at the same time the purest images of those essences which were later to appear in the world. They are the divine which lies in each thing and their form is more elevated than that of souls, from which they are explicitly distinguished. They are, in number and rank, as distinct as the essences that are in the world, because the nature and form of each thing depend upon this spiritual image. The divine intellect, Ormusd according to Zoroaster, thought them out all at once, hence they can live and be active for centuries before they are joined with their future bodies. They correspond precisely to Plato’s ideas and Pythagoras’ numbers. They are nothing other than spirits deriving from God and endowed with a more elevated form, they are inferior divinities, upon which the formation of all things depends” (I, pp. 427–429).

It was Aristotle who truly surpassed Oriental philosophy and its opposite (Atomism), from the point of view of both contents and method. His style is “clear and consistent with philosophy, it is not as metaphorical and allegorical as the style adopted by Plato and the multitude of emanationists, but at the same time is not as captious as the method of the Eleatics and the Sophists” (I, p. 472). Besides the difficulties encountered by the Aristotelian system, due to the fact that it remains nevertheless a “speculative” system, in presenting these doctrines, Adelung emphasizes the influence exerted at times by the one and at other times by the other system as well as the contradiction arising from the acceptance of opposing points

of view. The doctrine of motion and the demonstration of the existence of God, for example, are acquired from the East, whereas psychology, modelled on Eleaticism, ends with the negation of the immortality of the soul; Eleatic features are also present in the moral doctrine, which is as cold, sterile, and sceptical as that held by the Sophists, although it preserves traces of Platonic ethics, such as the theory of the superiority of theoretical virtues over practical virtues. In the field of natural theology too, which represents the pinnacle of metaphysics, the influences exerted by one or other doctrine are clearly visible; but here Aristotle reveals his originality when he no longer merely asserts the incorporeity but also the immateriality of the divine essence: "This first driving substance is God. He is without matter, as he had previously affirmed in an explicit manner; this is a remarkable theory, and if it is Aristotle's own, then it already represented a significant advancement towards abstraction because nearly all the philosophers before him had clothed the divine essence in some extremely thin matter" (I, p. 496).

Stoic philosophy represents a step backwards with respect to Aristotle and even Plato; not only did it take up Oriental emanationism, but also the simple and primitive form it had presented before the intervention of the Greek philosophers, who at least tried to provide it with a stronger philosophical foundation. The dominant characteristic of the Stoics therefore was dialectic, pure sophistic ability, through which they boasted an originality which in fact they lacked from the point of view of the contents. However, since they were founded on emanation, the morals of the Stoics were superior to those of Aristotle and the Sophists.

More praiseworthy is Epicurus' philosophy, not so much because of its speculative aspect, which takes up the Atomism of the later Eleatic school, as for its attempt to found morals on an independent basis, taking the concept of happiness as its primary criterion: "This is the first form of morals which is rational and consistent with the nature of man, and we would believe this with even greater conviction if some of Epicurus' moral writings had come down to us. However fascinating Plato's morals, Socratic morals, and all other morals founded on emanation are at a first glance, they are nevertheless based on foundations which collapse as soon as the lightest breeze of reason starts to blow, hence they are absolutely unphilosophical; moreover, they lead at once to the grossest form of *Schwärmerey*. That which has to act on the lower powers of our soul, the most effective and frequently the only impulse determining all our actions, must be deduced from these very powers; this is precisely what Epicurus' morals do with their fundamental concept of happiness and pleasure, insofar as it is allowed by his physical system; in this regard, they are greatly superior to Aristotelian morals" (II, pp. 46–47).

Scepticism represents the natural consequence of Greek philosophy as a whole and, in a sense, represents the final outcome of ancient philosophy. As we know, ancient philosophy was dominated by a single spirit, which led it to neglect observation and privilege speculation: "Pyrrho was too cultivated not to grasp the absurdity of these theories, so he followed the exact opposite method of proceeding, and cast doubt on speculative truths, viewing them essentially as dreams and sophisms, whereas he provided sense and practical truths with an appropriate degree of certainty, which is nothing other than extreme verisimilitude" (II, pp. 50–51). In

conclusion, the history of Greek philosophy is the history of the lack of fulfilment of philosophy as a science; the Greeks possessed enough spirit of invention and intellectual acumen to take this step forward but, dazzled by the brilliance of speculation, they were not able to recognise the necessary limitation that experience imposes on speculation. Adelung believes that “seeing what a single man, I refer here to Hippocrates, was able to do in the sphere of medicine and what the Greeks in Egypt were then able to do in the sphere of astronomy, we comprehend how philosophy would have had a lot to gain if they had united the natural brilliance of their intelligence with the path of observation” (II, pp. 101–102).

The only positive aspect of philosophy of the Roman age was the diffusion of the “philosophical spirit”, which accounted for the rise and establishment of two monotheistic religions, the Christian religion and the Islamic faith. In the realm of philosophy nothing new was produced, because the eclectic school (Neoplatonism) merely possessed an appearance of novelty: in reality it contained within it the themes and principles of several already existing schools. There was not only an absence of progress, but an actual regression, because philosophy started again to unite with religion and be dominated by superstition. “At first, vulgar *Schwärmerey* had merely been the destiny of popular religion or a few philosophical sects, while the other sects tried to dismiss or at least refine it. But now the most vulgar forms of superstition which ever distorted the human intellect became predominant again, flaunted the title of secret or heavenly philosophy and, to some extent, gained a scientific aspect, which was later to contribute greatly to their strengthening and diffusion. One can easily imagine how this arrested the human intellect, which, thanks to the most ancient Greek philosophy, had just began to free itself from the yoke of fanatical superstition” (II, pp. 191–192).

Neoplatonic syncretism influenced all the philosophy of the period, even Hebrew and Christian philosophy. Adelung objects to expressions such as “Hebraic philosophy”, “Christian philosophy”, or “pagan philosophy”, which had been used by Brucker: he considers them to be contradictory concepts because ‘philosophy’ and ‘religion’ refer to different ambits of truth as well as different tools of knowledge. However, considering that on a historical level this connection actually existed and during the first centuries of the Christian era a contamination between philosophy and religion took place, Adelung adapts himself to Brucker’s classification of Hellenistic Roman thought, simply taking care not to give it as much space as was devoted to it in the *Historia critica*. For example, Hebrew philosophy was not autonomous speculation but a doctrine acquired from the East and made compatible with Greek philosophy; the Cabbala was an absurd system, which does not even deserve the name of philosophy. The Christian religion itself did not produce a beneficial intellectual revolution, since its inspiration was not speculative but practical. Then philosophy penetrated into Christianity, and in most cases revealed Platonic, or even worse, Neoplatonic features, and thus brought about negative effects: Adelung meticulously lists the philosophical mistakes made by the Fathers, but without adding the observation – repeatedly formulated by Brucker as a partial excuse – that these mistakes were caused by a zealous defence of the religious truth.

The medieval age as a whole is considered to be an age of barbarism both in philosophy and in culture. After a few centuries characterized by total inertia, there was a revival of philosophy, first in the East, then among the Arabs, and finally in the West, where it culminated in Scholasticism. Yet, a peculiar point remains to be explained: when philosophy revived, it took Aristotle as its guide. The explanation advanced by Brucker is, according to Adelung, only partially valid. The predominance of Aristotelianism can be explained not only by the opportunity it affords us to use peripatetic dialectic in theological disputes, but also by a mistrust of the Platonic philosophy initially adopted by the Fathers, because of the heresies which thereby penetrated into the Church. Aristotelianism was placed at the service of the theological system in any case. This is the dominant feature of medieval philosophy: its status as a servant of theology. "We can by now easily imagine what can be expected from the philosophy of this period: not truth, but that which Constantinople, Rome, and Mecca passed off as truth; hence philosophy became, now more than ever, not just a servant but even a slave of the dominant religion. Should we be sorry for this? I do not think so; indeed, the entire philosophy of this and of the previous age did not deserve a better destiny" (II, p. 410).

The interpretation of Scholasticism is in total accordance with that of Brucker: the basis of Scholasticism was dialectic, which – even more than in Aristotle – took the form of the eristic art and sophistry; upon this depends metaphysics, which was constituted by abstract definitions, while the observation of reality was neglected; language and method were barbarous and obscure, the veneration inspired by Aristotle was excessive, and the control exerted by the ecclesiastical authority was oppressive. There is a more positive assessment of the few philosophers who concerned themselves with natural doctrine through observation and experience, in particular Albert the Great and Roger Bacon, while Thomas Aquinas misused Aristotle in the doctrines of faith and John Duns Scotus was, among the Scholastics, the most quibbling dialectician.

A profound change took place during the sixteenth century. What prevailed initially was a criticism of Scholasticism, which brought the human intellect back to the initial situation from which medieval thought had risen. The Greek schools were revived: first of all the Aristotelian school – within the framework of a polemic conducted first against the Scholastics and then against the Platonists – with the purpose of reaching the "true" Aristotle. This was finally the best philosophical tendency because, already in Antiquity, Aristotle had opposed all *Schwärmerey*, which indeed, with the revival of the other Greek schools, again started to rage through Europe. *Schwärmerey* is the condition shared by the restorers of the schools oriented towards "emanationism", such as the Platonic-Pythagorean school, the Cabbalistic school, and the other schools which arose from these, such as the Mosaic school and, the worst of all, the theosophical school (Paracelsus, Böhme, the Rosicrucians, and Swedenborg).

Spinozism has a special place within the history of modern pantheism. Spinoza was indeed "a sagacious and reasonable man", hostile to all superstition: "This system of his is nothing other than pantheism, but purified of all *Schwärmerey* and of the excesses of an unrestrained imagination, and brought to perfection, in



so far as this doctrine will allow, when it is elaborated with as much acumen as that possessed by Spinoza" (III, p. 314). However, the best aspect of Spinoza's speculation was not his metaphysical system but his moral doctrine, whose essence is rightly identified with the control of the passions and with man's duty to raise himself up by means of rational knowledge. "In this way, he not only avoids all *Schwärmerey*, into which the other pantheistic ethical theories usually fell, but also develops everything with such intelligence and reveals everywhere such an insight into the human heart that he cannot be denied applause, even if we should be just as unsatisfied with his metaphysical system" (III, p. 318). Finally, getting to the heart of the debate, highly topical in those years, concerning the value of Spinozism, Adelung contests Brucker's objection to the definition of the concept of substance: this is an abstract concept, and everyone can proceed in the process of abstraction as they like, especially – as in the case of Spinoza – when one intends to confute fanaticism and superstition. Furthermore, the accusation of atheism is ridiculous because it is aimed at a supporter of pantheism, and indeed a pantheism more elevated than that of certain Fathers of the Church, such as Clement, Origen, and Augustine. But we should not overdo the praises either: Spinozism remains a system based on hypotheses, and is equivocal and negative on a moral plane too because of the fatalism implicit in his metaphysical position.

Among the ancient schools which were revived during the modern age, Adelung privileges Scepticism; not a scepticism that denies the evidence of sensible knowledge, however, but a scepticism that questions the value of abstract knowledge. This, observes Adelung, is indeed "the most reasonable philosophy and I would not hesitate to say that it is the only true philosophy with reference to purely speculative objects, as is demonstrated by the nature and origin of our abstract concepts, because they are all derived from the rough corporeal world which surrounds us" (III, pp. 335–336). Hume understood this condition of human knowledge but, due to his excessively radical criticism of the concept of substance, he extended scepticism to the objects of experience.

During the seventeenth century, "eclectic philosophy" arose with Bacon and Descartes, and represented the first step in the direction of true philosophy. Compared with Brucker, the difference of interpretation concerns more the tone and the judgement rather than the actual historiographical reconstruction. Eclecticism lies beyond sectarianism and syncretism, revives experience, and addresses itself to the objects of the corporeal world; it does not constitute the summit and the essence of modern philosophy but only its pale beginnings. Philosophical reflection is still conditioned by two traditional defects: it devotes too much space to hypotheses and is concerned to adapt itself to the theological system. Descartes represents a typical example of this attitude: his doctrine of innate ideas privileges intellectual knowledge over sensation and devotes too much space to natural theology within metaphysics. Leibniz took up other hypotheses in addition to these, such as that of pre-established harmony, clearly contrary to experience, and the theory of monads, by which he tried to reconcile – by an act of extreme abstraction – the opposing solutions of emanationism and Atomism.

Greater credit is given to two other “eclectics”: Ch. Thomasius and Wolff. After more than 50 years in which Wolffianism was predominant, the judgement on Thomasius appears surprising, but Thomasius’ thought was congenial to Adelung on account of the prevalence of the practical operational aspect over speculation. He was the first to identify the purpose of philosophy, namely “not being the idle game of intellect and intelligence, but of promoting man’s happiness in social life”; he became thereby “the promoter of the enlightenment and the philosophical spirit which spread in Germany, particularly in the northern regions, from the beginning of this century onwards” (III, p. 389). Wolff’s victory in the battle against the Pietist theologians meant the triumph of this *Aufklärung*: “His numerous works, for the most part written in German, and the extraordinary size of his public, both in Halle and in Marburg, disseminated orderliness, enthusiasm for research, and reason throughout every faculty and class of citizens; and since his existence was placed in an age in which Pietism and mysticism were extending everywhere and not rarely degenerated into the strangest *Schwärmereyen*, his merit was all the more beneficial because his philosophy became the steadiest barrier ever raised against all kinds of *Schwärmerey*; hence we should not be surprised that all the theologians of his time, infatuated as they were with mysticism, were so keen to mark him with the brand of atheism” (III, p. 423).

Before giving a detailed analysis of each philosophical discipline, Adelung presents a structured evaluation of contemporary thought. He first lists its qualities, principal among which is a greater reasonableness (*Vernunftmässigkeit*). Ancient and medieval philosophy were nothing more than metaphysical – that is, abstract – speculation concerning objects situated outside the human possibility of knowledge; modern philosophy rediscovered the value of experience and gave abstraction an instrumental function in the search for human happiness. During this process of gradual liberation from metaphysical speculation, a fundamental contribution was provided, as we know, by the doctrine of nature and scientific discoveries. Nevertheless, the defects of the ancients are still present in contemporary thought, albeit to a lesser extent. Among these, the most serious remains an excessively close connection with religion, whereas history demonstrates that, because of this connection, “philosophy was transformed into *Schwärmerey* or religion into cold, dry speculation” (III, p. 439). The persistence of these mistakes is due to an excessive preference for the ancients, which is instilled in young people from their school years onwards and manifests itself in an unfounded prejudice that esteems Antiquity in all its aspects, even the most negative ones with regard to the *Aufklärung*.

Adelung reviews all the separate constituents of philosophy, and after emphasizing the progress made by physics, he proposes the model of Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* for logic, which should be extended by studying the origin of concepts on the basis of the structure of languages, which are “indisputable documents allowing us to follow the gradual path of the human mind from sensible to more abstract ideas” (III, p. 443). On the other hand, logic still contains too much speculation (as an example, he mentions Lambert’s *Neues Organon*) as well as too much metaphysics, although it is no longer as central as it had previously been. For this reason, Adelung underlines Kant’s merit in

dismantling metaphysics with his *Critique of Pure Reason*, using the weapons of metaphysics itself, and encourages him to pursue his goal: "Since speculation is by nature the most intolerant thing, he had to become an expert in its subtleties and quibbles; however, let us hope that he will have courage enough to accomplish his work and condemn this pseudo-philosophy to total death" (III, p. 455).

The "history of the philosophical spirit" and the history of mathematics can be considered as appendices to the history of philosophy. As to the history of mathematics, Adelung reveals no originality, since he simply presents a summary of the history of mathematics written by Jean-Étienne Montucla (on which, see above, p. 73). Adelung repeatedly asserts that the philosophical spirit is the chief effect of philosophy, which thus fulfils the task of raising people up to a higher level of intellectual life. Further, he observes that the philosophical spirit is in accordance with the philosophy which produces it; from this point of view, only the philosophical spirit that dissemination during the modern age had stable and beneficial effects for society.

In general, Oriental philosophy had no effects on a social plane, because it was the property of a caste and a secret for initiates; it was indeed too early for the *Aufklärung* to develop, since the common people did not need philosophy as a guide in morality but the severity of positive laws. The first expression of the philosophical spirit appeared in Greek culture and subsequently, under the influence of the latter, in the Roman world. The people became generally more cultivated but also inclined to dissoluteness; this was due to the character of the theoretical philosophy of the Greeks, that is to say, its predominantly speculative nature, which led it towards the conflicting systems of emanationism and Atomism. The same contrast manifested itself in the philosophical spirit, which denoted an unusual alliance of superstition and atheism: "On the one hand, emanation spread a sort of philosophical enlightenment, notably after the doctrine concerning the delusion of the senses had been accepted, but on the other hand it supported all kinds of quite vulgar superstitions, a belief in innumerable good and evil spirits, the means to subject them, the influence exerted by the stars, dreams, foreboding and other nonsense, so that it became a tool of obscurantism rather than enlightenment. Eleatic philosophy certainly dispelled these products of an unbridled imagination, but at the same time it removed all that which had been helpful in guiding human conduct, introducing and defending the worst corruption of morals. I believe that the mixture of these two conflicting forms of philosophical spirit is the real cause which provoked that peculiar contrast of superstition and atheism, outstanding virtues and singular vices, honesty and wickedness, moderation and dissoluteness, enlightenment and ignorance, which will hardly appear again among another people to the same extent as among the Greeks, even during the time of their greatest splendour" (II, p. 104).

The second manifestation of the philosophical spirit was an effect of modern eclectic philosophy, above all the diffusion of the natural sciences. It initially manifested itself in Italy, then it established itself in France during the seventeenth century, then in England, and finally, during the last century, it also became widespread in Germany. Just as modern philosophy is not only better than the ancient but is also the only true philosophy, so the modern philosophical spirit

disseminated the first, authentic form of *Aufklärung*: “This philosophical spirit not only propagates a higher degree of welfare among the members of society and makes morality more human, tolerant, and liberal, but it is also the reason why most affairs relating to civil life are treated in a proper, useful, and beneficial way” (III, p. 462).

**9.3.4.4** The aspect which, for Adelung, highlights the methodological originality of his work is the pre-eminence it accords to the general survey over the presentation of the individual points of the systems and doctrines themselves. Historians of philosophy, Adelung states in the ‘Vorrede’, make the common mistake of discussing the opinions held by each philosopher separately, removing them from the context of the system and commenting at length on each of them. The history of philosophy has thus become “an uncertain science, questionable, dry, and discouraging”. If one wishes to render philosophical history sounder and more engaging, the process must be reversed: the starting point becomes the connection sustaining the system and, more generally, the link between the systems on the basis of their fundamental tendencies. The opinions and attitudes of the philosophers thus find an explanation which is more reliable and easier to remember.

The importance attached to this general view is already clearly apparent in those parts of Adelung’s work that we have examined so far. Some of the theories are taken up and repeated, such as the development of ancient thought out of the Oriental system of emanationism, the characterization of this thought as “purely abstract speculation”, the conviction that the morals adopted by the emanationists have a positive aspect (asceticism) and a negative aspect (*Schwärmerey*), and that the morals adopted by the Atomists are relativistic and dangerous for morality, and so on. If that was not enough, in the ‘Vorrede’ to the third volume, Adelung, precisely in order to reassert his originality as a historian, briefly re-proposes the course along which philosophical reflection has developed from the beginning up to his time. To date, he concludes, the history of philosophy has been the history of the mistakes made by the human intellect, which has proved incapable of taking the only path which can be trodden in order to satisfy its need for learning. The protagonist of this history, the human intellect, eventually freed itself from error and reached maturity, becoming aware of itself, its value, and its limitations, and giving rise to philosophy in its proper form. What the “amateur” of philosophy learns from historical study can be condensed into the following message: “After the human intellect had again followed the circle of ancient nonsense from beginning to end, it wanted to start to think by itself and built different kinds of eclectic systems using fragments drawn from the ancients. But it finally became tired of all [this] rubbish, became conscious that it had so far been wrong to measure itself against objects lying totally outside its scope and, furthermore, that it had taken the raw material for its fabric from coarse popular ideas and subsequently from the dominant religion. After an aberration which lasted many thousands of years, for the first time it went back to its own, closest sphere of action, surrounding nature, so we are now for the first time on the right path leading to a true and rational philosophy, which can be a certain guide for man in every condition of life, and leave the future to its elder sister, religion, and

not expect from human reason more than that which conforms to its capability” (III, ‘Vorrede’, pp. X–XI).

In reality, this historical picture is less original than the author claims. Brucker also saw the fulfilment of the maturation of the human intellect (*historia intellectus humani*) in the course of the history of philosophy, and identified “progress” in this history with the development and revival of some typical speculative positions (Manicheism, Spinozism, Dualism . . .) and with their eclipse by modern “eclectic” philosophy. The originality of Adelung’s method lies perhaps in the primacy accorded to the general view, to which the description of the particular historiographical aspects is subordinated. This is shown by his interpretation of Socrates’s “genius” or Plato’s doctrine of ideas, which do not derive from an analysis of the various testimonies or from his reading of the texts, but are based on the presupposition of the dependence of these two philosophers on the system of emanation. Certainly, many details or useless discussions are thus removed; this applies for example to the problem of atheism, which Brucker discussed for each thinker; but it is also certain that the resulting historical reconstruction is extremely simplified and generic. For example, the distinction between Plato and Neoplatonism, upon which Brucker had dwelled at length, has been somewhat neglected and, in general, the difference between schools and systems appears to be a difference of ‘degrees’ in error rather than a real speculative difference or a difference in inspiration.

A dependence upon Brucker is indeed clear and could not have been ignored by an attentive reader of the *Historia critica*. We can just think of the interpretation of Neoplatonism and Scholasticism or even the presentation of modern philosophy, let alone a number of separate aspects, such as the subdivision of the Eleatic school into metaphysical and physical orientations, as well as specific opinions, such as the theory that the Aristotelian concept of entelechy remained obscure to the author himself. Brucker is the only historian cited; no other sources are mentioned and probably there were none, or they were possibly filtered through Adelung’s reading of the *Historia critica*. On the other hand, Adelung’s purpose was not to provide a collection and critical analysis of the sources, but rather a history of philosophy which would be as lively and instructive as possible, in order to justify the transition from speculative to experimental philosophy, and to strengthen the *Aufklärung*, now for the first time inspired by a ‘sound’ philosophy. He therefore repeatedly stresses the analogies between the historical and cultural conditions of the past and the present age, both in order to warn against the dangers implicit in certain attitudes or the persistence of certain errors and to demonstrate in any case the superiority of the present over the past.

The period privileged for establishing this comparison, which was then the focus of lively interest even in the sphere of political historiography, was the Roman age and late Antiquity. A curious phenomenon took place during this era: the *Aufklärung* grew but Neoplatonic philosophy imposed itself, and this for Adelung represented the form of Greek philosophy most linked to superstition. The explanation for this lay in the phenomenon of the *Aufklärung* itself, which disseminated the philosophical spirit on a wider social level, where sensibility prevailed over intellect,

thus engendering greater interest in those philosophies, such as that of Pythagoras and Plato, which are more grounded on games of the imagination than others – such as Atomism or peripateticism – which privilege intellectual abstraction. The danger of superstition therefore is ever present, even during the age of the *Lumières*: “An attentive observer can perceive this phenomenon quite frequently through the history of the human intellect and can thus explain the enigma of why, for example, in our time – in which the philosophical enlightenment expands rapidly as well as widely among classes and provinces which up to now were merely sensible – so many forms of superstition and fanaticism, which superior philosophy believed it had condemned to death long before, become popular again” (II, p. 164).

In describing the stages and rhythms of the progressive enlightenment of the human intellect, Adelung adopts a criterion which is different from that adopted by contemporary historians of philosophy. For the latter (particularly for Tiedemann), the progress of philosophy was rectilinear and necessary and manifested itself through an uninterrupted progression of knowledge, albeit according to different rhythms and modes, more or less rapidly, to a greater or lesser extent or depth. For Adelung too progress is natural, hence necessary; yet, it is not mechanical but rather resembles biological evolution, according to the scheme put forward by Herder in his *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte*. Decline and regression, like old age, are essential moments in any development because they indicate the completion of a certain evolutionary cycle, which is an indispensable condition for the formation of a new cycle. We can indicate circumstances and factors which explain the decline of culture, but its cause is intrinsic in culture itself, which – once it has reached maturity – declines and dies, as happened in Greece: “Ignorant and depraved rulers certainly contributed to some extent to this decline, but they were not its primary cause, which must be sought in the natural and necessary decline of culture when it reaches its height. Everything in the world follows this progressive movement, so why not culture too?” (II, p. 425).

Herder’s philosophy of history is only partially shared. Adelung undoubtedly derives his interest in Oriental thought from it, which in his view contains the first elements of the subsequent development of philosophical speculation, but without the polemical and anti-Enlightenment exaltation of this ancient period. For Adelung, ignorance is the distinctive feature of primitive man, whereas mature mankind possesses knowledge and is capable of judgement. Herder’s vehement protest against Voltaire and other thinkers of the “philosophical” century, because of their claim to raise themselves up as judges of the past, could easily be shared by Adelung as well, due to his inability to see beyond the viewpoint of the *Aufklärung*, of which he believed himself to be the spokesman and which led him to formulate judgements which were deeply unjust and anti-historical, such as his definition of Bede and Alcuin’s culture as inferior to that of a high-school student (III, p. 19). Adelung does not share Herder’s (or Winckelmann’s) zealous appreciation of the past and the values of each historical age; nor does he approve of the enthusiasm for the rediscovery and authentic comprehension of that past which had been promoted by the philological school of Heyne, from which Meiners, Tiedemann, and Buhle all drew inspiration. On the contrary, Adelung delivers a strong polemic against

Meiners and his “mania” for the ancients, almost to the point of defining the love for Antiquity and its study as incompatible with a defence of the *Aufklärung* and true philosophy: “I am really sorry that I have to defend myself in this way against Mr. Meiners, whom I have otherwise always highly esteemed. Indeed, I should rejoice if the legitimate defence I am obliged to frame because of his hasty parody would induce him to examine the philosophy of his Greeks with greater caution and philosophical spirit, to moderate his high opinion of speculative philosophy, and to get closer to that only true and beneficial philosophy of human life, which has so far been hindered by nothing more than by a blind attachment to the ancients and an abuse of speculation” (III, ‘Vorrede’, p. xxx).

**9.3.5** The *Geschichte der Philosophie für Liebhaber* does not claim to be a historical treatise but is intended to appeal to a wider audience; from this point of view, it met with some success, as is shown by the fact that it appeared in four editions, which was unusual for a work of this kind. Adelung’s ambition however was not only to produce a well constructed and accessible work, and he repeatedly stresses the originality of his method and the novelty represented by the general interpretation, summarized and proposed again at the beginning of the final volume. He put forward such a defence against some hostile reviews which had appeared in prestigious and widely circulating journals, such as the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* and the *Göttingische Anzeigen*.

Adelung had hoped that the original aspect of the work would be immediately apparent; he was therefore astonished to read (ALZ, 1787, I, no. 13, cols 113–114) that, according to the reviewers, he had managed without great effort to summarize and plagiarize Brucker’s *Historia critica*. Adelung objected by stating that the central idea of his work was not present in Brucker. In effect, Brucker had spoken of pantheism and emanation with reference to some systems (Pythagoreans, Alexandrian philosophy), but he had been careful not to extend these concepts to all Greek schools and he had defended the originality of Greek thought in relation to Oriental thought (cf. *Models*, II, p. 521). Adelung himself acknowledged that he had taken some information and ideas for his interpretation of separate questions from the *Historia critica*; but this was unavoidable in a work intended for “amateurs”. This is precisely the basis on which the reviewer had criticised it, pointing out the absence of an in-depth analysis of the historical materials and sources. The alleged originality of the general interpretation, that is to say, the extension of the concept of emanation to ancient and medieval thought as a whole, was precisely the theory that the reviewer of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* found least interesting, not to mention the author of the second review we have cited (GA, 1787, no. 18, pp. 175–176) who radically disagreed with this theory and was much harsher towards the *Geschichte der Philosophie für Liebhaber*. This reviewer, whom Adelung believed he could identify as Meiners, after some ironical remarks on the category of readers addressed by the work, summarized the interpretation nurtured by Adelung and judged it so unfounded that he advised against reading it: “The author discovers in all the peoples of the East and in the systems of all Greek philosophers the system of emanation and ardently combats all those who present a high opinion of Greek philosophy to the young. To his great disappointment, he sees

that the almost idolized philosophers of Greek Antiquity have surpassed – in their eccentric dreams about the essence and nature of things – their Eastern masters and forerunners; they did not progress but rather frequently regressed by several degrees. These observations elaborated by the author, in addition to the judgements on Pythagoras and Socrates that I came across – rather than the aforementioned declaration concerning the intended readership – dissuaded me from undertaking a closer analysis of the book” (GA, 1787, no. 18, p. 176; this passage is quoted by Adelung himself, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, III, ‘Vorrede’, pp. XX–XXI).

Adelung did not conceal his irritation: he declared that he wrote for readers, not for reviewers, who are frequently unable to mirror the opinion of the public; he then engaged in a direct polemic against the author of the *Geschichte der Wissenschaften* and reiterated his interpretation of Greek philosophy: it was nothing other than pseudo-philosophy (*After-Philosophie*), which neglected observation and experience, and lost itself in the realm of abstraction, thus proving itself inferior to Egyptian and Babylonian thought, which, at least, cultivated astronomy. Adelung is sardonic about the enthusiasm with which Meiners described the history of Pythagoreanism and the emotion with which he described the death of Socrates: “I would have to copy half the book to report all that sickening praise; indeed, it contains torrents of appellations like ‘divine’, ‘celestial’, etc, which might be used equally correctly for authors such as J. Böhme, D. Joris, Schwenkfeld, Weigel, Breckling, or Swedenborg” (*Geschichte der Philosophie*, III, p. XXIV). The strongest accusation aimed at Meiners regards his hostility to the Enlightenment; it is from pantheism and from the system of emanation elaborated by the Greeks that the mystics and fanatics of all ages have drawn inspiration for their pseudo-sciences, such as magic, astrology, alchemy, magnetism, and the like: “These are the authentic and acknowledged daughters of one and the same mother (a nice family indeed!), and he who exalts the latter also recommends the former” (p. XXVIII). Finally, Meiners’ method does not take into account the golden rule adopted by all good history of philosophy, which should perceive each author and each doctrine as connected to its system and within the context of all the systems of all ages; but Meiners let himself be dazzled by some positive aspects of morals, and thus extended his positive judgement to all the philosophy produced by thinkers like Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato. In conclusion, Meiners’ method is not philosophical (*unphilosophisch*), and lacks that general view which lends clarity and consistency to the historiographical picture: “As transpires from almost all the pages of his history, Meiners did not embrace the whole of Greek philosophy, not even where it manifested itself conspicuously” (III, p. XXIX).

Adelung’s self-defence did not gain him any greater esteem for his work, at least not from the specialists. Indeed, in Germany, the genre of the history of philosophy was predominantly intended for the universities and the attempt previously made by Heumann to give the broader reading public a historiography of philosophy had partially failed (cf. *Models*, II, p. 404). “From a historical point of view, his importance is negligible”, stated Tennemann referring to the *Geschichte der Philosophie für Liebhaber* (Tennemann, ‘Uebersicht’, p. 70), a judgement which



was taken up by Ernesti, who added the following remark: “As the author himself admits, he has not even drawn on any sources; he has followed Brucker almost exclusively, certainly not blindly, but without conducting a more in-depth critical research either. Since his object is of a general kind, he prefers to create an overall view and assess the value attributed to the different philosophers and sects, but is not greatly interested in that which is proper to each philosopher and characterizes him” (Ernesti, p. 84). It is no accident that the most positive judgement was formulated by a French historian: Degérando not only believed that Adelung’s project was well accomplished, but also approved of its popularizing and pedagogical basis: “He does not quote, he summarizes; he does not leave out the difficult questions but brings them to a level appropriate for his readership; he spares his readers the effort that he himself had to make and his common sense leads them with assuredness along paths they would be unable to follow by themselves” (Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, pp. 161–162).

**9.3.6** On Adelung’s life and works: Meusel, I, pp. 23–28; IX, p. 11; XI, pp. 5–6; XIII, pp. 9–10; BUAM, I, pp. 223–225; Ersch-Gruber, I/1, pp. 404–406; ADB, I, pp. 80–84; NDB, I, pp. 63–65.

On his historical and linguistic works: K.E. Sickel, *J. C. Adelung. Seine Persönlichkeit und seine Geschichtsauffassung* (Leipzig, 1933); K.A. Forsgren, *Zur Theorie und Terminologie der Satzlehre. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der deutschen Grammatik von J.C. Adelung bis K.F. Becker, 1780–1830* (Göteborg, 1973); J. Lüdtke, *Die romanischen Sprachen im Mithridates von Adelung und Vater: Studie und Text* (Tübingen, 1978); M. Strohbach, *J. C. Adelung. Ein Beitrag zu seinem germanistischen Schaffen mit einer Bibliographie seines Gesamtwerkes* (Berlin and New York, 1984); B. Naumann, *Grammatik der deutschen Sprache zwischen 1781 und 1856. Die Kategorien der deutschen Grammatik in der Tradition von Johann Werner Meiner und Johann Christoph Adelung* (Berlin, 1986); G. Mühlpfordt, ‘Der Leipziger Aufklärer: J.C. Adelung als Wegbereiter der Kulturgeschichtsschreibung’, *Storia della storiografia*, VI (1987), no. 11, pp. 22–44; D. Thouard, ‘Dalla grammatica allo stile: Schleiermacher e Adelung: riflessioni sull’individuazione nel linguaggio’, *Lingua e stile*, XXIX (1994), pp. 373–394.

Comments on the *Geschichte der Philosophie*: XIII (1787), cols 113–114; GA, XVIII (1787), pp. 175–76; ADBibl., no. 88/2 (1788), pp. 525–533; ALZ, no. 123 (1789), cols 169–172; Tennemann, ‘Uebersicht des Vorzüglichstens’, p. 70; Ernesti, p. 84; Carus, p. 85; Degérando, I, pp. 161–162; Braun, p. 183; Schneider, pp. 133–136 and 203.

## **9.4 Johann August Eberhard (1739–1809)** *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*

**9.4.1** Eberhard was an intellectual with many interests, and personally linked to representatives of the Berlin Enlightenment; he was the author of important essays on aesthetics, but also one of the last defenders of Wolff’s philosophical system. He represents that later eighteenth-century German culture which tried to mediate

the claims of the more radical Enlightenment, and he was open to the world of literature and art, with the erudite and systematic studies which were proper to the school tradition. Born in Halberstadt on 31st August, 1739, he attended the theological faculty in Halle, where he was taught by S.J. Baumgarten and Joh. Salomo Semler, two outstanding exponents of the new tendency of biblical criticism known as ‘neology’, and he subsequently extended his studies to philosophy and classical philology. In Berlin, he had the opportunity to become acquainted with M. Mendelssohn and Nicolai, who appreciated and defended his first and most famous work, *Neue Apologie des Sokrates* (1772). The polemic which ensued created a number of difficulties which hampered the ecclesiastical career that Eberhard had intended to embark on. Partly for this reason, he gladly accepted the chair of philosophy at the University of Halle in 1778, when it became vacant following the death of G.F. Meier, and he pursued Meier’s efforts to disseminate Wolff’s philosophy. His polemic against Kant and Reinhold is relatively well-known, in which he asserted the superiority of the Leibnizian and Wolffian systems in reviews specially written to confute critical philosophy. He was among the few to whom Kant addressed a written response. After devoting the last years of his life to a work of great erudition, a dictionary of the synonyms of the German language in six volumes, he died on 6th January, 1809.

**9.4.2** His first work remains perhaps his most famous: *Neue Apologie des Sokrates, oder Untersuchung der Lehre von der Seligkeit der Heiden* (Berlin and Stettin, 1772, 1776–1778<sup>2</sup>, 1787<sup>3</sup>; French transl.: Amsterdam, 1773; Dutch transl.: s’Graavenhage, 1773). The subject is theological in a broad sense: namely, the salvation of the pagans and the relevant doctrines of grace and original sin; but the treatment is fundamentally philosophical, as was critically observed by Johann August Ernesti, to whom Eberhard – quoting his master Baumgarten – answered that theological systems contain nothing but philosophy and can only be judged by philosophy (*Neue Apologie des Sokrates*, 2nd ed., I, p. XI). Starting from Leibniz’s theodicy and Wolff’s definition of “divine justice”, Eberhard criticizes the traditional theological doctrines concerning original sin and eternal damnation and develops a new defence of Socrates’ philosophy and religion (I, pp. 449–494) against the accusations that the Dutch theologian Petrus Hofstede, in his polemic against Marmontel’s *Bélisaire*, had made against Socrates and in general against all pagans. The work did not win universal approval, not even among those Enlightenment thinkers who were more determined to defend the principle of free thought with regard to theological doctrines; in particular, Eberhard was disappointed by the fact that Lessing sided against him,<sup>34</sup> so much so that he was induced to continue the work by adding a second volume in the second edition (in which he explained

<sup>34</sup>Cf. G.E. Lessing, *Leibniz von den ewigen Strafen*, in Id., *Gesammelte Werke*, VII, pp. 454–488 (the polemic with Eberhard is developed on pp. 465–488). The essay closes with Lessing’s well-known appeal: “O my friends, why should we wish to appear more sharp-witted than Leibniz and more philanthropic than Socrates?”. Regarding the polemic between Eberhard and Lessing, but also regarding the points of agreement between the two thinkers, see G. Pons, *G.E. Lessing et le christianisme* (Paris, 1964), pp. 255–257, 261–263, and 367–380.

his point of view more precisely) and to write the *Amyntor* (1782), in which he mitigated those expressions which might have appeared more in contrast with the theories adopted by official Christianity.

Eberhard cultivated the field of aesthetics with the greatest continuity, as evidenced by his works from the *Allgemeine Theorie des Denkens und Empfindens* (Berlin, 1776) to the *Theorie der schönen Künste und Wissenschaften* (Halle, 1783), as well as numerous essays and articles that he published in reviews and miscellaneous works, and finally the extensive *Handbuch der Aesthetik für gebildete Leser aus allen Ständen in Briefen* (Halle, 1803–1806, 4 vols). Eberhard developed Wolff's aesthetic doctrine along the line already drawn by A.G. Baumgarten and G.F. Meier, but departed from them on the grounds that they had tried to found aesthetics from the perspective of the object, while he considered the subject to be the foundation stone, thus placing himself closer to Kant and Schiller than to Wolff. While Baumgarten defined beauty as *perfectio phaenomenon*, for Eberhard it consisted of a feeling of pleasure, which is indeed produced by the sense of perfection but not relating to something outside the subject but to the subject itself and its representative faculty: "The perfection of a work can bring pleasure to us by no other means than the contemplation of *our* perfection. Indeed, we are immediately aware exclusively of the changes to our soul or our representations" (*Theorie der schönen Künste und Wissenschaften*, Halle, 1790<sup>3</sup>, p. 12).

Eberhard produced many significant works intended for use in schools. The programmatic work he wrote as an introduction to his activity as a professor of philosophy, which began in 1778, is the short essay *Von dem Begriffe der Philosophie und ihren Theilen* (Berlin, 1778). In the 'Vorrede' Eberhard declares that he has followed Baumgarten's philosophical textbooks and thus defines the final aim of all the sciences that are the object of his teaching: to lead to a rational knowledge of God. The title of the subsequent work is significant: *Sittenlehre der Vernunft. Zum Gebrauch seiner Vorlesungen* (Berlin, 1781), where, after defining happiness as consisting in a "state of true and uninterrupted pleasure" (§ 3), he is careful to invest reason – not sense – with the task of formulating judgements concerning the truth of pleasure (§ 4). Despite the reference to reason, Eberhard's ethics preserves a hedonistic character, as is demonstrated by his treatment of pleasures and their subdivision into four types: sense, imagination, intellect, and heart; he defines happiness as consisting in the finest alternation and balance of pleasures (§ 6). A further textbook is related to the topic of rational theology: *Vorbereitung zur natürlichen Theologie oder Vernunftlehre der natürlichen Theologie* (Halle, 1781); and in the following years he published the work which is the object of our present analysis: *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie zum Gebrauch akademischer Vorlesungen* (Halle: bey Hemmerde und Schwetschte, 1788, 1796<sup>2</sup>). This work, produced during the years 1785–1787, met the requirements of the university courses on the history of philosophy, for which Eberhard declared that he had been obliged to refer to Lodtman's old textbook (see the 'Vorrede zur ersten Ausgabe'); but his many activities for the pro-rectorate meant their publication was delayed and the *Geschichte* finally appeared after the important works by Meiners, Gurlitt, and Adelung. His textbook of the history of philosophy also appeared in an

abridged edition: *Auszug aus der allgemeinen Geschichte der Philosophie* (Halle, 1794), pp. VIII-166.

Among the other works, written in the context of his scholastic activity, let us mention the *Neue vermischte Schriften* (Halle, 1788), which contains an important essay entitled *Ueber die Magie* (pp. 279–402), where Eberhard also deals with the meaning of myths in Plato, a theme which is taken up and widely discussed in his history of philosophy. This essay, written when the polemic against Kantianism was already raging, was confuted by Reinhold on several points, such as the interpretation of the Platonic doctrine of the pre-existence of souls. His criticism of Kant's system led Eberhard, on the other hand, to a new positive appraisal of Leibniz and Wolff's philosophy, in particular their metaphysics, as is evident from the *Kurzer Abriss der Metaphysik mit Rücksicht auf den gegenwärtigen Zustand der Philosophie* (Halle, 1794). At the pinnacle of metaphysics is ontology, to which the various special forms of metaphysics are subordinated, namely cosmology, psychology, and rational theology: "Since it contains the first and fundamental truths of all human knowledge as well as the supreme concepts, metaphysics is the source of truth and complete certainty and clarity more than any other more perfect knowledge, which is therefore most unfavourably influenced by its mistakes and most advantageously influenced by its truths" (pp. 3–4).

Eberhard was one of the strongest opponents of Kant and critical philosophy, a position that is evident in his editorship of the journals *Philosophisches Magazin* (Halle, 1788–1792) and *Philosophisches Archiv* (Halle, 1792–1795), whose programme was outlined in the essay with which the former begins ('Nachricht von dem Zweck und der Einrichtung dieses philosophischen Magazins, nebst einigen Betrachtungen über den gegenwärtigen Zustand der Philosophie in Deutschland': PhM, I, pp. 1–8): the lively interest aroused at the time by philosophical texts can be ascribed above all to the elegant language and style that characterized the philosophical works of the moment; it is beyond doubt that Kant, with his claim of a radical revolution in philosophy, contributed to increasing the tension which existed in the philosophical debate; but at the very moment at which he abandoned Wolff's *realer Dogmatismus*, Kant could not help but fall into Hume's scepticism.

The central essay in the anti-Kantian polemic is entitled 'Ueber die Unterscheidung der Urtheile in analytische und synthetische' (PhM, I, pp. 307–332). In it, Eberhard attacks one of Kant's fundamental doctrines and challenges its originality: for him, Kant merely invented a new term, calling synthetic that which in Leibniz was already known as "non-identical judgement"; indeed, *a priori* synthetic judgement easily falls into the category of analytical judgements. The Kantian response initially came from Reinhold, who wrote a review – published in the Jena magazine *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* – condemning the *Philosophisches Magazin*; subsequently, in 1790, Kant himself took part in the debate: *Ueber eine Entdeckung, nach der alle neue Kritik der reinen Vernunft durch eine ältere entbehrlich gemacht werden soll* (Ak. A., VIII, pp. 185–251). Kant immediately showed his annoyance at the fact that his opponent arbitrarily reversed the order of reasoning with respect to his *Critique of Pure Reason*, in which the question of the possibility of *a priori* synthetic judgements precedes the other question concerning

the reality of our knowledge; by contrast, Eberhard first demonstrates the objective reality of ideas and then comes to found the possibility of judgements. But the most serious accusation is that, in his view, his opponent had not understood Leibniz, albeit claiming to be a follower, a form of behaviour similar to that adopted by most historians of philosophy who misunderstand the philosophers they are dealing with. It is precisely by basing oneself on the results of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that it is possible to assess Leibniz's greatness as well as his originality compared with the previous metaphysicians. Through his principle of sufficient reason, concludes Kant, Leibniz had not yet discovered *a priori* synthetic judgements, but he had indicated the right direction to follow in search of them.

Eberhard also entered into the debate on atheism taking place around Fichte at the end of the century: *Ueber den Gott des Herrn Prof. Fichte und den Götzen seiner Gegner* (Halle, 1799); *Versuch einer genaueren Bestimmung des Streitpunkts zwischen Herrn Prof. Fichte und seinen Gegnern* (Halle, 1799). He regretted the heated climate that surrounded this debate, caused initially by Kant and then by Fichte in overestimating their own originality. Taking Kant as his starting point, Fichte conceives of God as the world's moral order but denies that he is separate, self-subsistent substance, because he would then be something sensible and empirical, an idol, just like the god of his adversaries. To attempt to found faith in God by morality alone, as Kant had done – objects Eberhard – is insufficient; indeed, the notion of God as substance separate from the world is not contradictory but is rather fully in accordance with “sound human intellect”: “God is not only the source of moral law, he is the source of all truth, all reality, their origin and their persistence. He is omniscient, wise, good, and just; he is the ruler of the physical and moral world” (*Ueber den Gott des Herrn Prof. Fichte*, pp. 63–64).

Among Eberhard's last works (which include an extensive collection of synonyms: *Versuch einer allgemeinen deutschen Synonymik*, Halle, 1795–1802, 6 vols) particularly worth mentioning is one which marked his return to a subject treated in earlier meditations, a study on the origin and essence of Christianity, written as a polemic against Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* and entitled *Der Geist des Urchristenthums. Ein Handbuch der Geschichte der philosophischen Cultur für gebildete Leser aus allen Ständen in Abendgesprächen* (Halle, 1807–1808, 3 vols). This work opens with Eberhard recognizing a deep change in the cultural atmosphere in the transition between the two centuries, when Voltaire and Diderot were generally forgotten and the author now in vogue was Chateaubriand, indubitably an elegant writer, endowed with a vigorous imagination, but “eclipsed by the stains of shadowy *Schwärmerei*, blind superstition, and absurd ideas” (*Der Geist des Urchristenthums*, I, p. 5).

The polemic against *Mystizismus* is taken up again, in a broader sense, in a final chapter that attempts to oppose the now dominant romantic culture. A large part of the work is devoted to an account of ancient and Eastern philosophy, which is the basis on which arguments of a theological nature are grounded. The central theory, repeatedly stated and finally summarized in the conclusion, is the following: “I think that I have demonstrated that the true spirit of Christianity consists in a correct balance of Greek sense and Oriental sentiment (*in dem richtigen Gleichwichte des*

*griechischen Sinnes und des morgenländischen Gefühls*), of light and warmth, of the sensible and the nonsensible. The absence of both [these factors] leads to a corporeal and mechanical religiosity, and the predominance of one of the two – either sense losing itself in speculation or sentiment sinking into contemplation – leads to the sophisms of the Scholastics or to the dreams of the mystics, by which both the former and the latter disfigure Christianity and deprive it of its beneficial power” (III, p. 364). The theory of the compromise between rationality and sentiment which, in his view, is fulfilled in Christianity is probably a means by which Eberhard tried not to appear totally alien to the spirit of his time, so favourably disposed towards reasons of the heart and sentiment. In reality, as is revealed by a reading of the work, the theory that appears to be most credible as well as consistent with the convictions expressed by the author since the *Neue Apologie des Sokrates* is the substantial rationality of original Christianity, which in its theological basis does not depart from the religion professed by the pagan philosophers. For Eberhard, Christianity transformed philosophical religion into a public and popular religion. Only this widening of the social basis of “pure” religion and its educational function, rather than a doctrinal difference, constitutes the superiority of Christianity over the philosophical religion of the so-called pagans: “This was also the opinion that, in the first centuries, the most erudite Fathers of the Church held about the religion of their master. They did not prefer him to all the sages of Antiquity because his reasoning could convince other erudite thinkers of truth, but because by the power of his doctrine he led the peoples from error to a knowledge of truth” (II, p. 33).

**9.4.3** The comments on the concept of the history of philosophy are neither extensive nor particularly significant. The ‘Einleitung’ opens with an attempt to give a definition, but in practice it merely delimits the field of study: “The general history of philosophy contains precisely the account of the changes undergone by this science; it is therefore nothing other than the history of the erudite rational knowledge possessed by mankind concerning the general character of things” (*Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, p. 1). Hence, the history of philosophy does not welcome empirical knowledge, nor does it admit mathematics, which deals with the quantity of things instead of their qualities; but mathematics must be taken into consideration because of the links it frequently established with philosophy, especially in the earliest period.

Eberhard expands on the method and purposes of the historiography of philosophy at greater length: “If the history of philosophy has to be general, then it must be chronological, that is, it must contain an account of the most remarkable changes to have occurred throughout the whole of philosophy in the order of time. This chronological method must be connected with the pragmatic method to make the history useful both for a consideration of the gradual development of the human intellect and for a better understanding of the philosophical systems, and we can also make use of ineffective attempts when we search for the truth, and therefore correct our own system” (p. 2). The meaning of the pragmatic method is defined more clearly in the ‘Vorrede’. In the first place, ‘pragmatic’ history is that history which shows the gradual development of philosophical thought, “from the first

sensible philosophy, which is contained within the mythology of those peoples from whom we have acquired most of our culture, up to the most refined and elevated philosophical doctrines” (p. IV). The primary feature of a pragmatic history, therefore, requires a connection between doctrines in a sense which might be defined as ‘evolutive’, in order to outline the steps in the perfecting of the human intellect in its capacity for knowledge; in this way – explains the author in the ‘Vorbericht’ to the *Auszug aus der allgemeinen Geschichte* – the history of philosophy describes “the interesting scene of the gradual advances made by the human intellect in its development”.

Secondly, the pragmatic historian examines the very contents of the doctrines and seeks “the inner connection between systems and the link with other systems, in addition to the sources and conditions preparing the way for errors as well as the conditions preparing the way for the decline of truth into error” (pp. V–VI). Finally, we expect the pragmatic orientation to offer us some lessons: the history of philosophy puts us on our guard against the spread of “superstitious and fanatical” behaviour – which is fostered by a pseudo-philosophy that exalts the irrational and higher revelation – by presenting an analogy between this alleged wisdom and the concepts elaborated by ancient peoples, which were related to the infancy of the human intellect: “In a time when all the others sciences have made such remarkable advances, [the scholar studying the history of philosophy] will learn to feel ashamed of those first halting steps made by the human intellect in its germination, instead of praising the supreme height of an ultramundane science” (p. VII).

In order to be able to evaluate the different speculative positions, the historian must establish the true essence and the proper methodology involved in the act of philosophizing: this is the subject of the essay: *Von dem Begriffe der Philosophie und ihren Theilen*. In this respect, Eberhard’s historiography differs from the historiography produced by Meiners and Tiedemann, who had purposely avoided a rigid definition of the concept of philosophy, judging it arbitrary and misleading for a historical investigation, and it comes closer instead to the position of the Kantians, who had claimed the need for historiography of philosophy supported by a speculative position. We should not, warns Eberhard, let ourselves be deceived by the apparent multiplicity of the opinions on the essence of philosophy; the ancient philosophers themselves, if properly interpreted, reveal a basically unitary position on this question. First of all, it is necessary to identify the elements proper to philosophy – “the matter, the tool (*das Werkzeug*), and the work” – and, with the help of historical enquiry, try to understand how they emerged with the gradual separation of philosophy from the other sciences. This separation was already accomplished by the time of Plato, for whom “matter” consists of ideas and the “work” of philosophy in science (*Von dem Begriffe*, p. 14).

Against Berkeley, Eberhard not only asserts the existence of general ideas, but also makes them the only “matter” of philosophy, hence of science, regardless of whether they are acquired through induction or analogy, whether they have an empirical or a rational origin: “General ideas, which alone were called ideas by the Platonic school, are not the objects of sense; they are represented by the intellect and

possess a constancy and an immutability which the objects of sense do not have. The judgements they form possess a constant truth and are necessarily true, whereas the judgements formed by the senses possess only an accidental truth. The judgments of the senses can start and cease to be true, whereas the former must be eternally true. Hence, they lead to that which is called ‘science’, whereas with reference to sensible objects we only have faith and conjecture. If therefore the ‘work’ of philosophy is a more perfect – clearer and more certain – knowledge, then there must be a knowledge which is clearer and more certain than sensible knowledge, namely the science of necessary and suprasensible truths” (p. 23). Besides this definition of Platonic inspiration, it is natural for Eberhard to quote the definition given by Wolff and Baumgarten, and to conclude by asserting that ideas are the matter of philosophy, science is its work, and logic its tool.

To emphasize the peculiarity of Eberhard’s speculative position, it is sufficient to mention the exclusion of philosophy, taken in a strict sense, from experimental psychology, which for Meiners and Tiedemann, who were also anti-Kantians but close to Hume’s empiricism, constituted instead the essential part of philosophical activity: “If we want psychology to be a science, its object must be restricted to that which can be deduced through pure intellect from the laws of the representative faculty, which discovers the soul by reflecting on its operations. All that which remains and cannot be known through this medium, even if it conforms to it, must find its place within other disciplines, namely those disciplines that are based on experience and induction” (p. 46).

#### 9.4.4 *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*

**9.4.4.1** The *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, which we use here in its second 1796 edition, is a manageable handbook consisting of 318 octavo pages, including a short ‘Einleitung’ of 5 pages. The precise, extensive internal divisions reflect the order of the periodization. There are three periods: from the origin of philosophy to the year 500 AD (pp. 5–224); from the years 500 to 1500 (pp. 225–253); and from the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth (pp. 254–318). The first period takes up more than two thirds of the work and consists of three parts: the barbarian peoples (pp. 6–36); the Greeks (pp. 36–190); and the Romans (pp. 191–224). Greek philosophy is organized according to a relatively complex structure, which divides it into three sections: poetic philosophy (pp. 37–46), scientific philosophy (pp. 47–184), and philosophy outside Greece (pp. 186–190). The core of ancient thought is therefore constituted by the treatment of “scientific philosophy”, which comprises the two periods represented by pre-Socratic philosophy (pp. 47–99) and Socratic philosophy (pp. 99–184). The second period, devoted to medieval philosophy, is divided into three sections, which deal briefly with philosophy in the Greek Church and among the Arabs and, more broadly, with philosophy in the Western Church (pp. 232–253). Each of the three sections which make up the third period reflects one



century in the history of philosophy: the sixteenth century, the seventeenth century, and the eighteenth century.

The entire work is subdivided into 319 paragraphs, each presenting a different subject, followed by explanatory and bibliographical notes in smaller type. The text is preceded by the 'Vorrede zur ersten Ausgabe', a 'Vorbericht zur neuen Ausgabe', the 'Verbesserungen', and the 'Inhalt'; the index of names, finally, takes up about 10 pages. It is worth noting the appendix, which is added to the text in the second edition and covers a total of 24 pages: 'Chronologische Tabellen zur Geschichte der Philosophie'; this is divided into five columns, in which the author lists the most important events in political history and at the same time presents a chronology of philosophers, and provides information about the editions of the principal works. Up to the birth of Christ the date is calculated according to a threefold criterion: according to the Olympiad, before Christ, and before the foundation of Rome. Eberhard uses this framework to provide a picture clearly embracing the entire span of the history of philosophy. He declares that, despite his research, he had been unable to find and consult the 'Tabulae synopticae' from Brucker's *Historia critica*, edited by Matthäus Seuterus, and therefore had to organize the framework himself ('Vorbericht zur neuen Ausgabe').

**9.4.4.2** The periodization generally reflects the historiographical picture constructed by the *Historia critica*, even though, compared with the latter, it refers to the periodization used in political history rather than to ecclesiastical divisions; for this reason, the first period (ancient philosophy) does not end with the birth of Christ, but extends to 500 AD, the end of the Western Roman Empire. The second period comprises medieval philosophy, whereas the third period is devoted to modern philosophy from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.

Eastern and barbarian philosophy is only briefly sketched, without any particular emphasis. There are at least two reasons why Eberhard privileged Greek philosophy. In the first place, it is only among the Greeks that philosophy acquired the form of a science and, secondly, only Greek thought has left us any documents which can testify to its effective value; hence "it is only from the Greeks onwards that it is possible to trace an uninterrupted and connected history" (p. 5). The different emphasis placed on Eastern and Greek thought also depends on the way in which Eberhard conceives of the evolution of the philosophical spirit. As we have seen above, the history of philosophy is the history of the human intellect, the history of the progress and development of knowledge; but this development advances within each civilization, thanks also to exchanges between successive civilizations and cultures. Eastern thought therefore was of less significance than ancient Greek thought, although it was similar to it in many ways; once it reached a certain level of development, it stopped and ceased to influence the progress of culture. On the contrary, there is continuity of development between the poetic philosophy and the scientific philosophy of the Greeks: "We cannot properly understand the character of the scientific philosophy of the Greeks if we do not go back to the early condition of their culture, which necessarily contains several elements which were later to influence the opinions of philosophers and the way in which these opinions were expressed. Sensible knowledge always precedes scientific knowledge, and

the establishment of civil society provides an opportunity for the unfolding of various truths, the same truths which are later represented more clearly and correctly and whose form of presentation influences subsequent philosophical expression” (pp. 36–37).

“Scientific philosophy” is subdivided into two periods, which are marked by the figure and the teaching of Socrates: first the pre-Socratics, then the philosophical schools of the classical and Alexandrian age. There are three pre-Socratic schools: the Ionian, the Pythagorean, and the Eleatic. The Eleatic, considered apart from the Pythagorean school – which constituted a single orientation (Italic philosophy) in Brucker – does not include the Atomists, who represent “the new Eleatic school”, or even Heraclitus. As regards the latter, Eberhard points out that it is difficult to place him in the context of the pre-Socratic schools, “because he was not linked to any school. However, placing him in this section better accords with the chronology, the way of philosophizing, and the mode of expression of this age” (p. 93).

Socratic teaching marks the beginning of the most successful period of scientific philosophy, which also matured thanks to favourable external conditions, primarily of a political and geographical nature. Decisive, however, was Socratic reform, with which philosophy stopped searching for the origin of the universe and questioned its own usefulness. In this way it established itself as a self-sufficient science: “So far philosophy had not been separate enough from public life and its sphere was not distinct from that of the other sciences. Philosophers were for the most part men who participated in state affairs, and its masters educated public rhetors in particular. The Sophists of Athens belonged to this category too. Socrates was the first to practise philosophy as a self-subsistent science, existing by virtue of itself, and not as a part or a means of another art” (p. 117).

The last phase of scientific philosophy was decline: philosophy disseminated outside Greece, notably to Egypt, where Alexandria “became the principal seat of culture”; but when political freedom came to an end, the vigorous spirit of the Greeks weakened, and philosophy ceased to progress and limited itself to repeating the systems invented up until then: “Instead of philosophers, scholars appeared, instead of inventors interpreters” (p. 187). The Roman period shows the same decline, but this was intensified by the Roman temperament, which inclined towards warfare, conquest, and politics, and was relatively unreceptive towards the arts and sciences. A double philosophical method then disseminated: one for the uncultured, one for the learned: “The former was in harmony with the general inclination of the age towards magic, divination, astrology, thaumaturgy, and spiritism, and it apparently originated and was practised primarily in the East, from where it propagated to Rome and the other parts of the Empire. The latter was a continuation of the most ancient Greek philosophy, within which Stoic philosophy was particularly successful in Rome” (p. 195). The crisis of philosophy continued in parallel with the crisis of the Empire and finally led to the complete fusion of scientific philosophy with popular philosophy (and religion), which was carried out by Neoplatonism (“superstitious popular philosophy prevailed and erudite philosophy was used to support it with its theory and provide it with the appearance of a science”: pp. 206–207).

The transition from the first to the second period was marked by a political event: the end of the Western Roman Empire. But, as we have seen, the end of ancient philosophical culture had already been anticipated by Neoplatonism and was subsequently effected mainly by the diffusion of monasticism and superstition within the Christian Church: “These devastators [the barbarians] were joined by the fanatics (*die Schwärmer*) within the Christian religion, who considered all the sciences to be useless apart from the Christian religion and called them worldly knowledge” (p. 233). As for the periodization of Scholasticism, despite the proposal to date its beginning back to Fulbert of Chartres, Eberhard adheres to the traditional tripartition: from Abelard to Albert the Great, from Albert to Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, and from the latter to the religious Reformation.

Even the transition from the second to the third period, although dated around 1500, took place gradually and was determined by the crisis of Scholasticism which was induced by external factors already effective from the fourteenth century onwards, such as the political crisis of the Empire, the decline of the Church, and the emergence of an urban middle class. Between the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries the process of renewal advanced more rapidly thanks to the invention of printing, the emigration of learned Byzantines, and the transformation of the educational institutions which saw the establishment of new universities. The third period was dominated by the rise and development of modern philosophy, which was fostered by the discoveries and tendencies of scientific research: “These rapid achievements in the realm of the doctrine of nature, without the contribution of school philosophy but only through the art of observation, eventually deprived ancient philosophy of all authority and soon produced the idea of raising a philosophical edifice according to another method. Francis Bacon was the first to carry out this project” (p. 278). Bacon and Descartes represent the two prevailing tendencies of the sixteenth century, whereas Newton and Leibniz, together with their followers, dominated European culture during the eighteenth century. Around the middle of the century, the last period of German philosophy began with Wolff. Eberhard finally mentions “the Kantian revolution”, but he is careful not to identify it with the beginning of a new course in the history of thought.

**9.4.4.3** Eastern and barbarian thought is considered to be of little significance from a philosophical point of view. Its main feature is superstition and its political use in the interest of a caste. Among all the peoples of the East the sages were priests and represented an oligarchy that held the administrative power, which in many cases, as among the Egyptians, competed with the power of the king. In this context any advance in knowledge was impossible; neither was the rise of philosophy, strictly speaking, possible. Rather than on doctrines, Eberhard’s interest therefore focuses on other elements, such as writings, which among these most ancient peoples (notably the Egyptians) can be seen in their primitive form and consequently in their natural formation.

Greek poetic philosophy is important because it provided the seeds for the subsequent scientific philosophy. It represents the infancy of philosophy, which corresponds to the sensible phase in man’s life. Its first objects were therefore the objects of the senses; it then extended its gaze to the entire universe – always

considered in its entirety as a sensible object – and explained its origin by an analogy with the origin of bodies. Eberhard emphasizes the philosophical value of the ancient theogonies, referring to the studies conducted by Heyne into the significance of myth and allegory in the culture of the Homeric age: “In this sense, it cannot be denied that the earliest philosophy concerning the world was allegorical, as is attested to by the authentic remains of poetic philosophy, which explain the origin of the sensible universe. This use of allegory by the most ancient forms of poetry is largely in accordance with the character of language and the sphere of ideas of a coarse people, provided they are not given a meaning that presupposes a knowledge above the horizon of the most ancient culture” (p. 39).

The transition from poetic to scientific philosophy took place gradually with the separation of popular religion from the philosophical doctrines, which acquired a certain autonomy through observation and through the purification of expression from the sensible form. A change in the doctrine of the Ionian school took place above all with Anaxagoras, who abandoned once and for all the way of thinking of the poets and founded the first nucleus of a rational theology: “Among the philosophers of the Ionian school he was therefore the first to derive the origin of the world not only from a material cause but also from an efficient cause; and if it is true that only a rational essence, distinct from the world and the efficient cause of the world, can be named God, then he was the first to introduce theological doctrine into the philosophy of the Ionian school” (p. 59).

Among the pre-Socratic schools, much space is devoted to Pythagoreanism because it introduced the important discovery of non-sensible principles: “Pythagoras’ system is the first philosophical system in which, besides the sensible principles of the parts and phenomena of the world, we also find non-sensible principles. It initially included the theory, shared by previous philosophy, that all things derived from a prime disordered matter similar to the chaos of poetic philosophy. In order to show how this prime matter could give rise to a well-ordered world, Pythagoras admitted a certain accordance of disordered matter and the ordering principle with the properties of numbers” (p. 69). Following the historiographical tradition, the Eleatic school is subdivided into two phases: a more ancient phase comprising the philosophers considered to be Eleatic in a proper sense (Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Zeno) and a later phase including the Atomists. Albeit full of “obscurity, contradictions, and strange doctrines”, the first Eleatic system deserves attention because “it contains the first seeds of the doctrine of ideas” (p. 86). This doctrine results from reflection on the nature of the supersensible world, which Parmenides understands as an object of the intellect and defines as the intelligible world. The interpretation of Atomism follows the traditional framework: it arose from the attempt to overcome the Eleatic contradictions concerning the sensible world but ended up as a simplistic explanation of reality, in addition to the fact that mechanism was necessarily to lead to atheism.

The second and most important period of scientific philosophy begins with Socrates, and indeed the entire period of Greek classical philosophy from the age of Pericles to the Stoics can be designated as “Socratic”. The Sophists, whom Eberhard revives to a certain extent, served to disseminate the new philosophical climate that

characterized Athens after the Persian wars. But the central figure emerging in all his moral and intellectual stature, before the hidden purposes of the “multiscience” cultivated by the Sophists, is Socrates, the subject of an impassioned apology by Eberhard. “Since his plan was to show the hollowness of the Sophists and make their arts ineffective, he necessarily provoked their hatred as well as the hatred of their numerous party. The slander with which they made him disliked by the people, and which the priests and demagogues certainly helped to divulge, eventually prepared his condemnation, which he might have avoided if he had given up spreading a rational religion and ethics and his strenuous defence of the oppressed against the powerful” (pp. 105–106). This Socrates as the defender of the oppressed was perhaps the only element lacking in the traditional hagiography of the “martyr” of Athens and was indubitably appreciated in the climate that dominated the later eighteenth century, in opposition in particular to the flattery of the Sophists.<sup>35</sup> From a doctrinal point of view, Socrates focused his reflection on theology and ethics: “The chief content of Socratic philosophy consisted of a popular theology and a general natural ethics: he therefore differed from the philosophy proposed by all his predecessors and successors. In the realm of theology he devoted himself exclusively to inquiring into final causes; indeed, he rightly affirmed that they are better known to us than the efficient causes and that inquiring into the former is more useful than inquiring into the latter. He mixed popular theology with natural ethics and taught that the best divine cult, which is most appreciated by the gods, consists in carrying out our duties towards ourselves as well as our social duties, among which our domestic and civil duties, because in fulfilling all these duties we better attain the final purpose of the supreme essence, which consists in the perfection and happiness of the whole” (pp. 111–112).

The interpretation of Platonic philosophy leaves aside the misunderstandings of Neoplatonic origin. The exaltation of the literary value of the *Dialogues* is accompanied by an attempt to provide a coherent interpretation of the Platonic system precisely on the basis of the poetic form and the literary expedients used by Plato: “The poems that Plato interspersed throughout his dialogues have been rightly subdivided into the poetical, the political, and the theological. Those of the first type have as their only purpose the embellishment or sensible representation of a universal truth, and hence they are merely allegories; those of the other two types, which can properly be called myths, have a further purpose, which is undoubtedly that of expressing – through a story which has the credit of being a poetic representation or an ancient tradition – those parts of research which lie beyond the horizon of reason and human experience” (p. 140). The Platonic system is therefore coherent in all its parts, dialectic, physics, theology, and ethics. The importance of Plato lies in the development of the Socratic questions, hence not so

<sup>35</sup>During the first half of the eighteenth century, the most widespread image of Socrates was that of a supporter of the aristocratic party and an enemy of the people, hence rightfully condemned; cf. M. Montuori, *De Socrate iuste damnato. La nascita del problema socratico nel XVIII secolo* (Rome, 1981).

much in the theory of ideas as in the formulation of a rational theology (founded on the proofs of the existence of God) and in the elaboration of an appropriate ethical system, which makes man's duties depend on the need for the perfecting of his nature.

From Aristotle onwards the philosophical system appears to be perfectly accomplished from a formal point of view. This is due to the place assigned to logic: "Aristotle was the first to lead philosophy, in its entire extent and with all its parts, towards a consistent system. He did not leave out any part, from the more general principles to the more specialized parts regarding natural knowledge. Within logic, which he considered to be an organic part of philosophy, he developed the rules of rational knowledge so profoundly and presented them so thoroughly that the modern reformers of logic could only extend the rules of empirical knowledge" (p. 153). Among the parts which make up the Aristotelian system, natural history and metaphysics are judged more positively, but at the pinnacle— as unanimously agreed by all eighteenth-century historians — were rhetoric and poetics.

Among the schools which emerged during the Alexandrian age, greater emphasis is placed on the Stoic school, not so much because of its ethics, which is interpreted as a continuation of the problems discussed by the Cynics, as for its dialectic, which seems to anticipate some of the themes proper to modern logic. "The Stoics understood the concept of dialectic correctly, since they applied to it the rules of perfection relating to clear knowledge. They divided concepts into sensible or empirical concepts (φαντάσματα) and intellection concepts (νόηματα). The latter arise from comparison (abstraction), composition (arbitrary connection), and analogy. Modern logic has transformed these two modes into one" (p. 168). By contrast, Eberhard places little importance on the philosophy of Epicurus ("His philosophy agrees in its principles with that of Democritus, whose writings he had read with great care. Cicero depicted it exactly by saying that, due to its superficiality, it accords with the capabilities shown by the ordinary powers of the intellect and that Epicurus' concepts of the divinity are infantile. The same can be said about his moral philosophy": p. 175).

As we have seen, the development of philosophy from the Alexandrian age to the end of the Roman Empire is marked by the subordination of speculation to religious superstition. The basis of the various tendencies of this period can be represented by Alexandrian philosophy, which was characterized by the following doctrines: the existence of only one God, the doctrine of demons, and the emanation of the latter and of the sensible world from the supreme God. Eberhard's judgement is totally negative: unlike Tiedemann, he does not believe it is possible to find in it any element which may have contributed to the progress of philosophy; rather, in later Neoplatonism (Iamblichus and Proclus) he finds theurgic and magical doctrines that the mystics of recent times have taken up, passing them off as revelations of a higher wisdom, thus fostering modern *Schwärmerei*. By contrast, Patristic thought has a purely marginal role. In a note, Eberhard observes that "the Christian religion, as a popular religion and in so far as its doctrines have an external sanction, does not strictly belong to the history of philosophy, and it should not be neglected just because of its sources and consequences" (p. 204).

In dealing with medieval philosophy, Eberhard focuses on the writers who lived during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, who represent the pinnacle of Scholasticism, because it was then possible to benefit from the substantial contribution offered by the Arabs and to take advantage of some important discoveries, such as the compass. Tiedemann is cited more than once; but while Tiedemann had revived Scholasticism by referring to the doctrines most particular to it, and had stressed the function performed by ontology and medieval metaphysics in promoting the development of modern thought, Eberhard views this line of progress in the realm of scientific and naturalistic research. Central importance is therefore not accorded to Thomas Aquinas or Duns Scotus, but rather to Albert the Great, Roger Bacon, and Peter of Abano, who had the merit of promoting the study of nature through observation and with the aid of mathematics. In this regard, let us note a significant positive judgement formulated on the “pure” Aristotelian trend (Peter of Abano, Arnaldus de Villanova), which was heterodox compared with official Scholasticism and which made use of peripatetic philosophy to provide a “naturalistic” explanation of reality.

The development of this scientific perspective, which was marginal to Scholasticism and came to contrast increasingly with it, constituted the decisive factor which determined the rise of modern philosophy. Indeed, what distinguishes modern thought is the attitude towards the philosophy of nature: “That which for so many centuries had prevented philosophy from going beyond the area already trodden, while enabling it to accelerate its course from the seventeenth century onwards, so much so that every day it made advances, belongs to the character of modern philosophy itself, whose beginning should be placed precisely in the seventeenth century. Indeed, ancient philosophy concerned itself with the knowledge of nature. But 1) instead of seeking and discovering the condition of natural things through experiment, it tried to deduce or guess this on the basis of the general truths of reason; 2) logic was therefore extended through syllogisms, the science of the rules of deduction from the universal truths of reason, but not the art of observation, that is, the art of observing appropriately and deducing the laws of nature from these observations” (pp. 273–274). The beginning of modern philosophy was therefore marked by discoveries in the field of mathematics and astronomy. Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo showed Bacon the path to be followed in philosophy as well, namely “the experimental method, according to which philosophical truths must be demonstrated by induction, observation, and research” (p. 279).

Proceeding in this direction, Descartes built the first complete system of modern philosophy, in which Eberhard, significantly, accords pre-eminence to the discoveries made in the fields of physics and mathematics and judges metaphysics negatively. Cartesian philosophy also lost a considerable part of its authority due to Spinoza, who, basing himself on concepts which were already ambiguous and confused in Descartes – the concepts of substance and extension – built a new system which led to atheism. Eberhard takes up the criticisms formulated by Bayle and Brucker in order to confute the multitude of those who, in his time, had applied themselves to reviving Spinoza’s thought.

Coming finally to recent philosophy, Eberhard's preferences become even more explicit. Locke's mistake was to privilege external sense as a source of knowledge, whereas Ch. Thomasius's analysis lacked profundity; Leibniz was superior to them both: he "included all the parts of philosophy and mathematics in a more precise systematic connection; his unlimited erudition embraced, improved, corrected, utilized, and made available all the important knowledge acquired by his predecessors, or at least, through unknown correlations, he renewed and appropriated it" (pp. 300–301). The point of reference of eighteenth-century German philosophy was Wolff. "We can make the last period of German philosophy start with Christian Wolff, who by his method and by introducing clearer, well-defined concepts into all the sciences has brought about in Germany – even among ordinary people, who do not know or do not admit the principles of his philosophy – a more philosophical spirit, and a greater clarity and validity of thought" (pp. 305–306). Wolffianism extended the range of influence of philosophy, so that it imbued the whole of German culture; Eberhard claims that Wolffianism caused the *Aufklärung* to penetrate into religion and law and the foundation of aesthetics in particular; similarly, he traces back to Wolffianism the most recent literary tendency and poetic criticism, bringing together the names of Wolff, Baumgarten, and Meier, with Sulzer, Mendelssohn, and Lessing.

**9.4.4.4** Eberhard declares that he has followed the "pragmatic" method, and makes it clear that this is chiefly a method that traces "the history of the human intellect", and more precisely the progress of the human capability for knowledge. Indeed, he takes into account the global picture of the states of progress and regress, or its entrenchment in outdated positions, which are known by philosophical reflection; this is the case of Eastern speculation which stopped at the phase of the infancy of the intellect, whereas the clearest example of a complete evolutionary cycle is provided by Greek philosophical culture, which presents a birth (poetic philosophy), maturity (pre-Socratic philosophy and scientific philosophy), old age, decline (Alexandrian philosophy), and finally death (later Neoplatonism), which sees philosophy going back to its point of departure and dissolving into religious superstition. In the history of philosophy there are other phases which show a similar cyclical progression, such as Scholasticism and even modern thought, which arose from the scientific revolution and reached the apex of its development with Newton, Leibniz, and Wolff, but which, according to Eberhard, shows worrying signs of decline; for this reason, after presenting the Kantian system, the work closes with a paragraph devoted to the new "foolish" systems, *Schwärmer* (J. Taylor, Swedenborg, G.F. Werner) which takes up the chimera typical of Böhme and the Neoplatonists.

In the second place, pragmatic history involves grasping the connection between doctrines within each system, establishing a comparison between the systems thus reconstructed, and evaluating the mistakes, the truth, and the conditions which determined both the mistakes and truth. This rule essentially follows the typical way of proceeding of Brucker's *Historia critica*, in which the search for the 'system' was the chief purpose of the historiography of philosophy. Yet, in Eberhard the fulfilment of this task is less important. Perhaps it is also due to the limited extent of the



work that Eberhard is not able to carry out a full reconstruction of all philosophies: he frequently limits himself to mentioning the doctrines which characterize the different systems, with respect to which it is possible to measure their degree of originality as well as their worth. Even the comparison between systems is proposed fragmentarily and only as concerns the most obvious cases, such as the relationship between the Stoics and the Cynics, Spinoza and Descartes, or Hobbes and Epicurus.

Finally, pragmatic historiography contains a lesson for the reader. Eberhard thus repeats the pedagogical intent of the historiography of philosophy since its introduction into the world of the school thanks to Thomasius and Buddeus. This function was then intensified by the culture of the Enlightenment, which, as we know, was a militant culture which aimed among other things at creating an “enlightened” mentality. In order to perform this function, Eberhard considers himself entitled to frequently intervene with his own judgements, to point out the mistakes and uncover the prejudices which led philosophy along erroneous paths. Sometimes, the need to draw a lesson leads him to abandon the traditional account of the systems, in order to emphasise those doctrines which are of immediate interest for the reader: an example of this is the description of Stoic philosophy which, in addition to dialectics, physics, and ethics, contains a section devoted to psychology. Some philosophers are granted greater prominence than others on account of the greater topical relevance or the hazards relating to the issues they dealt with. Following this criterion, the space devoted to the Cyrenaics is greater than that given over to a discussion of the Platonic school, because these philosophers provide Eberhard with the opportunity to warn his readers against the dangers of an overtly hedonistic ethics.

From a methodological point of view, Eberhard introduces nothing particularly novel compared with previous historiography. At most, what distinguishes his way of proceeding is greater care from a philological point of view, notably his recourse to documentary evidence as a basis for judgement and historical reconstruction, while, at the same time, he keeps them distinctly separate from the interpretations put forward by modern historiographical literature. Eberhard is aware of the contemporary significance attributed to philological and classical studies, especially thanks to Heyne and his school; as a model for the criticism of the sources applied to the historiography of philosophy, he mentions the introduction to the history of Pythagoreanism published in Meiners’ *Geschichte der Wissenschaften* (see above, Sect. 9.4.4). It is above all the progress made in this kind of study, warns Eberhard, that makes Brucker’s *Historia critica* no longer completely reliable, even though he does formulate a moderately positive judgement on Brucker’s work (‘Vorrede’, p. v).

As a theoretician of aesthetics, Eberhard is very sensitive to the style and the expression used in philosophical literature. It is possible to trace a history of these aspects too, from the early faltering manifestations to the perfection of philosophical language – which is also poetical language – contained in Plato’s *Dialogues*: “First of all he gave them all the interest that dramatic poetry is capable of arousing; furthermore, he managed to enliven them with the abundant multiplicity of moral figures embodied by the characters, introducing humorous and moving situations as well as excellent descriptions of the scenes, and thanks to brilliant phrasing,

which frequently borders on poetry, he often delights the reader with references to famous passages from poets" (p. 139). We have seen how the correct explanation of the literary device of myth in Plato leads to a more coherent interpretation of Platonic philosophy itself, which – once freed from certain doctrines devoid of all philosophical foundation, such as that of the pre-existence of souls – reveals itself to be less contradictory than it had appeared to Heumann and Brucker.

While the work may be brief, the emphasis on the historical context of doctrines is particularly strong. The decisive elements for an understanding of the spirit of a philosophy are not the circumstances relating to the biography or psychology of the authors, but rather the political and social conditions and the general characteristics of the culture. The discussion of medieval philosophy is particularly effective, in which the various cultural developments are closely intertwined with the historical and political events. Eberhard takes the barbarian invasions and the diffusion of monasticism as a starting point to explain the end of classical culture and the "infantile" character of the new culture, which he considers to be more related to memory than to intellect (§ 215). There is a moment of progress with the institution of the Palatine school and the cathedral schools, but the unrest which ensued after the death of Charlemagne and the Hungarian and Norman invasions prevented the sciences from flourishing (§§ 217–218). Progress resumed with the return of relative calm (the eleventh century), which favoured cultural exchanges with the Arabs; and Scholasticism was born (§§ 219–220). The intense development of philosophy during the thirteenth century can be explained by a greater knowledge of Aristotle, mathematics, and Arab natural science, but also by the increase in commerce and the discovery of the compass which facilitated navigation (§ 226). These last factors – in addition to the creation of stronger central governments, the gradual disappearance of serfdom, the improvement in agriculture, the rise of a "middle" class, the development of the professions and arts, and the reform of educational institutions – paved the way for the birth of national literatures and the rediscovery of the authentic remains of ancient literatures (§§ 234–235). The renewal of culture led to the eclipse of Scholasticism, whose third phase – from Durandus of Saint-Pourçain to Gabriel Biel – was one of decline (§§ 236–238).

The opening up of the history of philosophy to political and cultural history brings Eberhard's historiography near to that of his contemporaries Tiedemann and Meiners. For Eberhard too, the categories of 'originality', 'discovery', and 'progress' represent important criteria for historiographical evaluation; similarly, he feels the need to point out the differences revealed by apparently similar doctrines in different civilizations and periods. For this reason, Eberhard takes up Hissmann's argument (see above, Chap. 9, Introd., d) with the Frenchman Dutens and, concerning the theory of heliocentricity for example, stresses the importance of Copernicus' discovery: "In general, when comparing the ancients with the moderns, it should be observed that a simple agreement between doctrines cannot deprive the moderns of the honour of the invention, unless one can demonstrate that the ancients used it with the same result and formed their opinion on the basis of the same foundations. This does not apply to this part of astronomy because it was only in the

modern age that scholars began to evaluate the question on its real foundations, and the principal and decisive observation has still to be found” (p. 75).

However, let us point out a difference from the criteria adopted by Tiedemann, for whom the only factor on which to base a judgement was the value of the doctrines in relation to the progress of philosophical knowledge. Eberhard possesses a criterion which is more strictly philosophical and, as we know, is constituted by Leibnizian and Wolffian philosophy. In truth, judgement of a philosophical nature is neither continuous nor invasive, but emerges in the context of the most topical subjects, hence especially concerning modern philosophers. Other significant differences are to be noted compared with the historiographical picture drawn by Tiedemann, such as the wholly negative interpretation of Neoplatonic philosophy and, in part, of Scholasticism, both of which seem closer to the description provided by Brucker in his *Historia critica philosophiae*. In the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*, on the other hand, these two moments of the history of thought are revived on the presupposition of the continuous and uninterrupted progress of philosophical speculation. As we have seen, Eberhard does not reject the idea of progress, but conceives of it as a cyclical progression, similar to the biological evolution that accompanies the development of the various civilizations and the transition from one civilization to another.

**9.4.5** Eberhard’s history of philosophy was published at a particularly fertile moment for historiography in Germany; indeed, it came out after the textbooks by Meiners, Gurlitt, Adelung, and Gmeiner, while it just preceded the publication of the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*. In comparison with these works, the *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, despite its ambitious title, is not as extensive, but more accurate in its outer form (periodization and chronological tables). Indeed, it met with a fairly positive reception, even on the part of the Kantian circles which were later to become hostile to Eberhard. The review *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, for example, highlighted the novelty of the methodological approach adopted in Eberhard’s work, that is to say the “pragmatic” method, which we might define more precisely as “genetic”, which aims to comprehend “the gradual development of philosophy from its very first seeds”. Eberhard’s point of view, the reviewer remarks, is correct; also praiseworthy is the intention to carry out the Leibnizian project of a history of philosophy which is not about philosophers but about philosophy (ALZ, no. 5, 1788, col. 49). The reviewer’s observations, on the whole well-founded, are also interesting, namely that: Eberhard speaks about the “revolutions” which took place in philosophy at the end of each period, but does not explain whether they concerned the outer conditions surrounding the philosophical disciplines or their inner content; Eberhard declares that he has followed a chronological order, but in practice, when he deals with Greek philosophy, he still uses the framework of the succession of schools; the Socratic revolution is excessively emphasized, but Eberhard maintains that it was Plato and Aristotle who promoted a new epoch in the history of philosophy (*das Jünglingsalter der Weltweisheit*) (col. 51).

As we know, the relationship between Eberhard and the Kantians was to become extremely tense in the years that followed. The absence of any reference to Kantian aesthetics, for example, provided the review with the opportunity to launch a

radical attack against the third edition of the *Theorie der schönen Künste und Wissenschaften* (see ALZ, IV, 1790, col. 777); but the second edition of the *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie* seemed to appease the Kantians somewhat thanks to a description of critical philosophy which is acknowledged to be “short but free of controversy” (NGZ, LV, 1796, p. 436). The pronounced anti-Kantianism professed by Eberhard did not prevent Tennemann from appreciating the qualities of the *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*, which in general is considered to be better than that by Meiners: “Despite this mixture of many extraneous things which do not belong to the history of philosophy, such as the mathematical discoveries, and even though the material comprising the history of philosophy strictly speaking is too limited even for a summary, and not enough attention has been paid to the internal connection between events, nevertheless [the author] has elaborated a description of philosophemes and their foundations more accurately. But here too modern history is discussed with less precision than ancient history, and it is little more than a catalogue (*Nomenclatur*)” (Tennemann, ‘Uebersicht’, p. 68). Similar judgements are expressed by Ernesti and Carus, while Degérando, whilst not mentioning any defect, notes a spirit of impartiality in evaluating the doctrines as being among the work’s qualities (Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, p. 162). In recent times, scholars of the historiography of philosophy have shown no particular interest in Eberhard’s work: Freyer quotes him among the representatives of “popular philosophy” who also concerned themselves with the history of philosophy; Braun limits himself to stating Eberhard’s project, but does not examine how it was carried out.

**9.4.6** On Eberhard’s life and works: Franck, II, pp. 171–72; BUAM, XVII, pp. 254–260; Meusel, II, pp. 128–31; IX, pp. 265–66; XI, p. 183; XIII, p. 302; XVII, p. 466; Ersch-Gruber, XXX/1, pp. 223–326; ADB, V, pp. 569–71; NDB, IV, pp. 240–41; DECGPh, pp. 261–266.

On his philosophical, religious, and aesthetic thought: K. Lungwitz, *Die Religionsphilosophie J. A. Eberhards* (Erlangen, 1911); G. Dräger, *Eberhards Psychologie und Aesthetik* (Halle, 1915); Wundt, pp. 282–284 and 287–289; Adickes, pp. 87–89; Pupi, *La formazione della filosofia di Reinhold*, pp. 150–164 and 248–258; A. Altmann, ‘Eine bisher unbekannte frühe Kritik Eberhards an Kant Raum- und Zeitlehre’, *Kant-Studien*, LXXIX (1988), pp. 329–341; M. Gawlina, *Das Medusehaupt der Kritik. Die Kontroverse zwischen Immanuel Kant und Johann August Eberhard* (Berlin and New York, 1996); M. Zahn, ‘Der historische Kontext der Kant-Eberhard-Kontroverse’, in I. Kant, *Der Streit mit Johann August Eberhard*, M. Zahn and M. Lauschke eds. (Hamburg, 1998), pp. XIII–XL; G. Hassler, *J. A. Eberhard (1739–1809): ein streitbarer Geist an den Grenzen der Aufklärung: mit einer Auswahl von Texten Eberhards* (Halle, 2000); D. Dumouchel, ‘Le domaine de l’entendement pur: Eberhard et l’enjeu leibnizien du criticisme’, in *Années 1781–1801*, pp. 127–134; *Allgemeine und Hermeneutik des 18. Jahrhunderts in Halle*, ed. G. Schenk (Halle, 2009); *Ästhetische Geschmacksbildung und Kunsterziehung an der Fridericiana im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. G. Schenk (Halle, 2010); *Ein Antipode Kants? August Eberhard im Spannungsfeld von spätaufklärerischer Philosophie und Theologie*, H.-J. Kertscher and E. Stöckmann eds. (Berlin, 2012).

Reviews of his history of philosophy: *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie*: GA, no. 101 (1788), pp. 1012–16; ALZ, no. 5 (1788), cols 49–52; OALZ, no. 291 (1788), cols 3221–26; JE, IV (1789), p. 349; ADBibl., no. 112/1 (1790), pp. 26–36; NGZ, no. 91 (1793), pp. 727–28; GGZ, 1794, pp. 172–75; NADB, XV/2 (1795), pp. 520–23; NGZ, LV (1796), pp. 436–38; ALZ, no. 179 (1797), cols 609–11; OALZ, no. 48 (1797), cols 759–68; NADB, XVIII/2 (1799), pp. 320–25; Tennemann, ‘Uebersicht des Vorzüglichstens’, PhJ, 1797, p. 68; Ernesti, pp. 105–06; Carus, p. 85; Degérando, I, p. 162; Freyer, p. 63; Geldsetzer, pp. 223–24; Braun, p. 184; Schneider, 57, 74, and 144.

## 9.5 Dieterich Tiedemann (1748–1804)

### *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*

**9.5.1** Dieterich Tiedemann was born on 3rd April, 1748 in Bremervörde, a small town in the duchy of Bremen, where his father was mayor. At the beginning of his studies, he became deeply interested in the works of the German mystics (including Johann Arndt, who strongly influenced Spener and pietism), and initially undertook the study of theology. With this object he improved his knowledge of Latin at the Verden *hohe Schule*, where he also learnt French and studied French literature. During the two years he spent at the University of Bremen, his friendship with his contemporary Christoph Meiners (see above, Sect. 9.2) – which would last throughout his lifetime – encouraged him to turn his interest from theology to philosophy. Their philosophical collaboration also fostered by lectures on the history of philosophy and by the reading of Brucker’s works, was not limited by sectarian concerns, but remained open to the most diverse influences and works; the two friends created a shared library and read Locke, Descartes, and Malebranche.

On Meiners’ invitation, Tiedemann moved to the University of Göttingen in 1767, where he stayed for three semesters. Disappointed by the difficulties he encountered in the study of mathematics, which he learnt by attending a course held by Abraham Gotthelf Kästner, and inspired by the intellectual tastes of his friend, he took Greek lessons given by Jeremias Nicolaus Eyring, which enabled him to read the Greek philosophers in their original language and draw material for his history of ancient philosophy directly from the sources. He then left Göttingen (partly due to a conflict with his father, who was displeased that his son had abandoned the ecclesiastical profession) and worked for several years as a private tutor. In 1774 Meiners called him back to Göttingen, and he was invited to join the group of pupils who attended the philological seminar held by Heyne, one of the leading lights in the intellectual and cultural life of the Georgia Augusta (see. above, Chap. 9, Introd., c). Tiedemann’s activity in the field of the history of philosophy was inspired by Heyne, who read and approved the first works of his pupil and to whom he dedicated the first volume of his *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*. It was again Heyne who in

1776 obtained him the chair of ancient literature at the *Carolinum* in Kassel; this obliged him to leave Göttingen for good.

During his Kassel period (1776–1786) Tiedemann's concept of philosophy became more clearly defined, although he never structured it into a rigorous system. In addition to his increasingly significant historical research, the field of enquiry in which he developed his philosophical position was psychology, in which he tried to orient and resolve the problem of the nature and origin of human knowledge. In a polemic against Berkeley's idealism, he initially adhered to materialism, although this never evolved into atheism or the denial of the immortality of the soul. With the diffusion of critical philosophy, the polemical target became Kantian 'idealism', against which Tiedemann wrote his *Theätet* and *Idealistische Briefe* in defence of a fundamental realism. Tiedemann did not have his own definite philosophical system with which to counter the positions of the Kantians, but rather adhered to a general eclecticism, far removed from the narrow outlook of the school and in fact quite receptive to Hume's empiricism. As his biographer confirms, if he had had to choose one of the philosophical schools, he would have declared himself in favour of the new Academy (Wachler, 'Vorrede', p. XVIII).

After the closure of the *Carolinum*, Tiedemann was appointed to the chair of philosophy at the University of Marburg, with an income of 200 thalers and the title of court councillor. His teaching activity lasted for 18 years and was apparently very successful, thanks to his use of plain and simple language and his frequent recourse to examples drawn from everyday life and from travel reports; among his lessons, those which attracted the greatest number of students were those concerning the history of civilisation, the history of philosophy, and psychology. He died suddenly of pneumonia on 24th May, 1804.

**9.5.2** Tiedemann's writings were influenced by the philosophical debate taking place in Germany in the final decades of the eighteenth century. The subject of his first essay was the question of the origin of language, the object of a competition promoted by the Academy of Sciences in Berlin (which preferred Herder's dissertation): *Versuch einer Erklärung des Ursprungs der Sprachen* (Riga, 1772). The most important research he undertook during the first period of his studies concerned anthropology: *Untersuchungen über den Menschen* (Leipzig, 1777–1778, 3 vols). The first two volumes adopt the perspective of materialism, in a polemic against Berkeley; the third volume shows a different philosophical position, influenced by the author's reading of Tetens, which tends to overturn both materialism and idealism with the hypothesis of an active faculty of the soul, a primary faculty which is different from the passive faculty.

As we shall see, up to 1790 Tiedemann mostly devoted himself to studies of a historical character; but the rapid rise to dominance of critical philosophy between 1780 and 1790 induced him to extend his interests from the anthropological and psychological field to the theory of knowledge. Tiedemann's most important philosophical research is represented by an essay from the year 1794, in which the polemic against the Kantians is clear from the title itself: *Theätet oder über das menschliche Wissen. Ein Beytrag zur Vernunft-Kritik* (Frankfurt a.M., 1794). It

contains an appeal to the Kantians to examine the question more profoundly, criticism of their philosophy, and a strong disapproval of their method and arrogance: "It seems that they have tacitly adopted the principle that clarity and intelligibility of expression are only characteristic of popular philosophers and are incompatible with the profundity of an authentic philosophical system. The supporters of the other philosophies are expected – through the most accurate and endless study of the critical philosophy – to move entirely into the spirit of the Kantians, which is foreign to them and therefore difficult to grasp; it would be more correct for those who want to assert a new system to move into the form of thought of those whom they wish to convert. [...] Such an attitude leads to intellectual despotism, a sectarian spirit, and to blind faith, and it seems to me that it does not conform to free and rational beings, especially when they claim they possess the highest degree of reason and morality" (*Theätet*, 'Vorrede', pp. XVI–XVII). Between the dogmatism of the Kantians, who claimed they possessed "the universally valid philosophy", and Scepticism, Tiedemann followed a middle path, according to which philosophy at present does not possess the form of a universally valid philosophical system, and perhaps will never be able to possess this completely, but, by its very essence, aims precisely at this end.

The fundamental philosophical problem is the definition of the relationship between ideas and reality, in order to ensure the possibility of objective and necessary knowledge. Three solutions have been put forward – realism, idealism, and critical philosophy – but Tiedemann believes they can be reduced to two, because Kantian philosophy results in a form of idealism: "The two latter cases are fundamentally reduced to only one, although at first glance they seem different. Indeed, in the latter case [critical philosophy] all that we know about objects derives from us alone and we know them exclusively on the basis of that which we introduce into them starting from us, as if they were entirely produced by our mental faculty. On the basis of this theory it is not possible to demonstrate the existence of objects either, but only to presuppose it arbitrarily. All that which comes to our awareness about objects is only the form that passes from us to them; this cannot possibly inform us of their existence" (pp. IX–X).

The solution that remains valid for Tiedemann is realism, which, however, is subject to a series of corrections and clarifications not entirely alien to the themes of critical philosophy. There exists in our knowledge something which is conceived *a priori*, Tiedemann maintains, referring to Tetens; the (active and passive) faculties which are proper to consciousness. Yet, since in our representations we are not capable of separating the *a priori* from the *a posteriori*, it is not possible to establish the nature of *a priori* knowledge with precision. Tiedemann thus seems to alternate between critical philosophy and realism, although he repeatedly asserts the concordance between representations and reality, both on the level of empirical and intellectual knowledge, a concordance which indeed has never been demonstrated but taken as a fact: "The *a priori* possibility of the relations that the intellect believes lies in the intellect itself; this possibility has not only the task of determining the ideas of relation but also of regulating representations and ideas so that the thought of relations can be applied to them. Moreover, these ideas of relation

have an objective reality and agree with that which things actually are in their relation to one another. From the nature of thought certain laws follow, so that it is impossible for the intellect to think something that is not in accordance with them. Their necessity lies in the intellect. But these laws are at the same time the laws of objects and have the same necessity in objects themselves" (p. XIV). The first principle of philosophy, the proposition underlying all further speculation, is "I have consciousness" (*ich habe Bewusstseyn*); this is the absolutely simple judgement in which the predicate comes to coincide with the subject itself: I know myself only as being conscious; consciousness is essential predicate of the self. From the being of the self as consciousness Tiedemann deduces not only the reality of the self, but also that of the external world, whose existence is attested by the impressions of external sense, of which I have the passive faculty in consciousness.

As a continuation of the *Theätet*, and in order to respond to the objections and continue the debate instigated by the Kantians, Tiedemann published the *Idealistische Briefe* (Marburg, 1798: twenty letters written from 27th May to 20th June 1798 to Heinrich Friedrich von Dietz) as well as some articles which include a short essay intended to emphasize the limits of critical philosophy but also the original contribution offered by Kant to philosophical inquiry, having been the first to define the terms of the problem of the possibility and nature of science ('Etat présent de la philosophie en Allemagne', ME, 1798, no. 21, pp. 63–68). His last work, published posthumously, is entitled *Handbuch der Psychologie, zum Gebrauche bei Vorlesungen und zur Selbstbelehrung bestimmt* (Leipzig, 1804). In this work, the problem of knowledge is placed where the author believes it should be placed, namely within a systematic study of the faculties of the soul, their development, and the relationship between soul and body.

The other field of research in which Tiedemann was constantly active and enjoyed greatest success concerned his study of the history of philosophy. His first work of considerable length, written in Göttingen under Heyne's direction, was the *System der stoischen Philosophie* (Leipzig, 1776). The internal subdivision of this work reflects the tripartition of philosophy adopted by the Stoics: logic (236 pages); physics and metaphysics (248 pages); and morals (348 pages). The historiographical method is already well defined: criticism of the sources; description of the doctrines through the use of fragments and testimonies instead of the interpretations by modern historians; emphasis on the originality of the system of the Stoic school as well as on the similarities and differences with respect to the other schools; and a philosophical assessment of the deficiencies and contradictions of the system. Despite the criticisms aimed at separate aspects of Stoic thought (which, according to some, were due to the superficiality of Tiedemann's philosophy, which came close to the philosophy of common sense and hence had difficulty with more profound speculation: see ADBibl., 'Anhang von 25. bis 36. Bd.', v, p. 3047), the work contains a revival of the Stoics against Brucker, who reduced Stoicism in part to the questions addressed by the Cynics and in part to those addressed by the Christian religion, with the aggravating factor of Spinozism which was alleged to characterize the spirit of the system. Tiedemann indicates two reasons which determine the



importance of the Stoic school: the novelty and originality of its doctrines; and the importance and profundity of its philosophical reflection.

One of Tiedemann's objectives as a historian of philosophy was to re-examine the spirit of writer's age, which becomes increasingly difficult the further back in time one goes. Armed with the necessary critical and philological tools, Tiedemann devoted himself to the study of the early period of Greek philosophy: *Griechenlands erste Philosophen, oder Leben und Systeme des Orpheus, Pherecydes, Thales und Pythagoras* (Leipzig, 1780). Here he established a number of rules for each author in order to define his authentic thought amidst the contradictions of the ancient testimonies. For example, Tiedemann considers Orphic doctrines to be only those doctrines that writers living during the classical age ascribed to Orpheus and that are similar to those of Hesiod but different from those of Pythagoras; the testimonies produced during the Alexandrian age are inauthentic. As a result, Orpheus is far from both Spinozism and the emanative system proper to later speculation. In order to form an idea about who Orpheus really was we should visualize those sorcerers and wizards who were active among the primitive peoples of Asia and America (p. 26). It is interesting to note that this work appeared at the same time as the first volume of Meiners' *Geschichte der Wissenschaften* and reveals a familiarity and a common ground which is clear from the examination of the sources of Pythagoreanism.

1781 saw the translation of a Hermetic work: *Hermes Trismegists Pömander, oder von der göttlichen Macht und Weisheit, aus dem Griechischen, mit Anmerkungen* (Berlin and Stettin, 1781). The renown that Tiedemann already enjoyed as a scholar in the history of philosophy was augmented by the Bipontine edition of Plato's works, for which Heyne had invited him to write the introduction: *Dialogorum Platonis argumenta exposita et illustrata* (Zweibrücken, 1786). It is interesting to note that here Tiedemann abandoned the systematic way in which Platonic thought had been interpreted so far, giving up the idea of a general overview and presenting the arguments and doctrines contained in each dialogue and in the letters.

In response to a question which was the object of a competition promoted by the Academy of Sciences in Göttingen, Tiedemann wrote a *Disputatio de quaestione: quae fuerit artium magicarum origo, quomodo illae ab Asiae populis ad Graecos atque Romanos, et ab his ad ceteras gentes sint propagatae, quibusque rationibus adducti fuerint, qui ad nostra usque tempora easdem vel defenderent, vel oppugnarent? Quae praemium tulit a Societate Scientiarum Regia, quae Gottingae est* (Marburg, 1787). The work consists of three parts: the first part deals with the origin of magic from a historical and psychological point of view, and considers it to derive in part from the trickery of those who profited by it and in part from the nature of man, his ignorance of natural causes, his tendency to measure natural phenomena in relation to himself and to perceive an animate and living universe, and from his anxiety about the future. The second part, which comprises two thirds of the work (pp. 14–115), presents the history of magic, with particular emphasis on the Alexandrine period and Neoplatonism, on account of the influence that the magical and theurgical doctrines of this period exerted on the modern age. While the crudest form of magic, diabolic magic, was irrevocably disrupted by the philosophy of

Descartes, Wolff, and Ch. Thomasius, magic has survived in the Cabbalistic system and in theosophy, in beliefs such as astrology, plastic natures, and the evocative power of words, as can be seen in the thought of the English Platonists (Cudworth, More) and the German mystics (Paracelsus, Böhme, the Rosicrucians). The third part confutes the proof brought forward in favour of magic by the Neoplatonists in Antiquity and by the Cabbalists of the modern age. According to Tiedemann, no criterion can establish the truth of apparitions, we do not know the nature of spirits and, even if they existed, they could not affect bodies.

Tiedemann's most impressive and famous work, however, was the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*, in six volumes, published in Marburg from 1791 to 1797. The title page of the first volume reads as follows: *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie von Thales bis Sokrates, durch Dieterich Tiedemann, Hofrath und Professor der Philosophie in Marburg* (Marburg: in der neuen akademischen Buchhandlung, 1791). In the same year the second volume also came out (... *welcher von Sokrates bis Carneades geht*), whereas the third (... *welcher von der neuern Akademie bis auf die Araber geht*) appeared in 1793; and between 1795 and 1797 the last three volumes appeared (IV: ... *welcher von den Arabern bis auf Raymund Lullius geht*, 1795; V: ... *welcher von Raymundus Lullius bis auf Thomas Hobbes geht*, 1796; VI: ... *welcher von Thomas Hobbes bis auf Georg Berkeley geht*, 1797). The work, which is now available in anastatic reprint in the collection "Aetas Kantiana" (Bruxelles, 1969), ends somewhat abruptly with Berkeley, due perhaps in part to Tiedemann's disappointment at the criticisms aimed at him from various sides (see the 'Vorrede', rather short and bitter, to volume VI: "One can still read here and there that, from Brucker's time onwards, nothing has been done in the history of philosophy; hence it is advisable to sit on one's hands, even though one should have the decency to say that the work was not totally in vain").

In addition to these major works, let us mention a number of articles dealing with historical and political themes: 'Gedanken über den Ursprung der Zauberei', DM, 1776, no. 12, pp. 1087–1098; 'Ueber die Aechtheit einiger Pythagoräischen Schriften', DM, 1778, no. 8, pp. 150–172; 'Anmerkungen über die Pithagoräische Musik', *Musik. krit. Bibliothek*, 1779, no. 3; 'Ueber Plato's Begriff von der Gottheit', *Mémoires de la société de Kassel*, I (1780); 'System des Empedocles', GM, 1781, no. 4, pp. 38–71; 'De materia quid visum sit Platoni', *Nova bibliotheca philologica et critica*, I/1 (Göttingen, 1782); 'Utrum scepticus fuerit an dogmaticus Zeno Eleates', *Nova Bibl. philol. et crit.*, I/2 (Göttingen, 1783).

Among Tiedemann's other writings, let us mention: *Preisschrift über die beträchtlichen Vortheile, welche alle Nationen des jetzigen Zeitalters aus der Kenntniss und historischen Untersuchung des Zustandes der Wissenschaften bei den Alten ziehen können* (Berlin, 1798); *Welchen Einfluss hat die Dichtkunst, besonders in frühern Zeiten, auf die Bildung des Verstandes gehabt?* (Haarlem, 1802); *Rinant Denon's Reise in Nieder- und Ober-Aegypten, während der Feldzüge des Gen. Buonaparte, aus dem Franz. übers. und mit Anmerk. begleitet* (Berlin, 1803). Among his unpublished works is a translation of the Aristotelian *Physics*, an *Allgemeine Gesetzgebung der Sitten*, and a *Geschichte der Menschheit*.

**9.5.3** The six volumes of *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* represent, in Tiedemann's production, the outcome of 30 years of research in the field of the history of philosophy. The factors that stimulated this interest were, on one hand, of a non-sectarian, philosophical nature (similar to Meiners) intended to privilege 'research' with respect to the systematic aspect, and, on the other, the philological and critical discipline which he had learnt from Heyne. However, a deep theoretical analysis of the concept of the history of philosophy remains alien to Tiedemann, who – in the 'Vorrede' to the first volume of his work – focuses his attention on the methodological problems and, in the prefaces to the other volumes, responds to the criticisms raised by the Kantians precisely in order to dispute the possibility that a "well-defined theory" of the history of philosophy should govern and guide historiographical work.

Tiedemann was mainly interested in determining a number of methodological criteria and in identifying the most correct way of proceeding, in an attempt to fulfil the historiographical programme set out by Christian Garve (see above, Chap. 9, Introd., d). To this end, he put forward a short definition of the history of philosophy at the beginning of the 'Vorrede': "This history must narrate with the greatest possible precision the origin, progress, and attainment of the highest degree of perfection of philosophy, not like a chronicle, but following the chain of cause and effect (*nicht chronickenmässig, sondern im natürlichen Zusammenhange der Ursachen und Wirkungen*); it must therefore give an account of what has been taught by each philosopher as well as the foundations on which he based his assertions" (*Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*, I, p. v). Two indications concerning the method follow from this: in the first place, limiting oneself to an account of the doctrines by using the words of the author himself appears to be inadequate. The same terms have different meanings with different philosophers, and it is therefore appropriate to reconstruct the vocabulary of each thinker. Doctrines must not be simply 'told' but traced back to their foundations: "Secondly, it is not enough to present disconnected propositions taken from each system; for philosophy is a science from its very foundations and rests on foundations rather than on mere assertions, because only on these foundations does the greater or lesser appropriateness of the propositions rest, and only in these foundations does the sharpness and profundity of an author become manifest. Nor is it enough to present propositions according to an order which is arbitrarily chosen; but since science is the connection and deduction of one proposition from another, one should provide, when possible, the link that the author himself gave them or, at least, the link that makes it possible to demonstrate how one proposition derives from another in the simplest way" (I, p. vi).

The object of enquiry is not the philosophies and doctrines as such, their being true or not, but the progress of science, the path followed by philosophy from its very first appearance up to our time. In the eyes of a historian of philosophy, systems and doctrines only become significant in relation to this process of the perfecting of philosophy: "The task of the historian of philosophy is to reveal the growth of this science; his concern must be to examine the new and original affirmations formulated by each author and the extent to which, through this author, new ideas have been introduced into this science and old ideas have been clarified and defined

in more precise terms, how he has discovered new demonstrations and doctrines or has corrected and rectified earlier ones. The historian must remain indifferent to the truth, strangeness, absurdity, or impiety of statements; he must report with equal care and solicitude everything that happened, except when proven absurdity dispenses him from his obligation to recount, and a doctrine does not contribute anything to the progress and improvement of this science" (I, p. VIII).

The 'progress of this science' is the basic concept in Tiedemann's historiographical theory. Deslandes and Brucker had already stressed this factor, as they had defined the history of philosophy as the *histoire de l'esprit humain*, or the *historia intellectus humani*. However, the historiography of the early eighteenth century associated the idea of progress with a more general and at the same time more restricted meaning. It was a corollary of eclecticism, resulted from a fundamental theoretical concern, and showed the philosopher historian that the path of the perfecting of philosophy ran precisely through the study of the history of philosophy because of the possibility that it offered to sift through the mistakes of the past for partial truths on which a more complete system of knowledge could be built. Hence, what mattered was not to describe the path of philosophy historically, nor to highlight the progressive steps followed, but to ensure the possibility of this progress in the present. The history of philosophy as a whole appeared to be an *infinita falsae philosophiae exempla*; indeed, progress revealed itself to be historically significant almost exclusively in the opposition between the Middle Ages and the modern age, in the transition from the "darkness" of Scholasticism to the *Aufklärung* of eclecticism.

The progress of science enlightens and penetrates the entire historiographical picture drawn by Tiedemann, a picture which has no areas of shadow and no regression of any kind. Progress is the very object of historical study, which, as we have seen, is not concerned with *philosophy* (or philosophies, systems, and doctrines considered in themselves), but with the *progress* of philosophy and human knowledge. It is certain that, in Tiedemann's perspective, as for the eclectics of the early eighteenth century, the past is of interest for the present, since it offers the possibility to enlarge and strengthen the patrimony of knowledge possessed by the philosopher.<sup>36</sup> The present, however, is not the final goal that must be pursued dogmatically as a term of comparison and judgement, but represents one of the

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<sup>36</sup>See Tiedemann's response to the question, which was the object of a competition by the Academy of Sciences in Berlin in 1797, concerning the advantages of historical knowledge for the sciences: "A historical knowledge of the ancients and a study of their opinions and doctrines can still provide advantages in almost all parts of philosophy, mathematics, and natural history; as concerns philosophy, these advantages consist in more important and original concepts, in new principles, in more profound demonstrations of the separate theses, and in a more correct appraisal of systems as well as in new systems; as concerns mathematics, the advantages consist in the discovery of new and better theories; finally, as concerns natural history, they consist in new and more precise observations, in the discovery and erasure of some errors, and in more exact and more immediately clear descriptions" (*Preisschrift über die beträchtlichen Vortheile*, p. 104). Tiedemann's answer was awarded a prize together with that by Daniel Jenisch (cf. Geldsetzer, pp. 31–33).

moments in which the necessary progress of reason is accomplished, a progress which presupposes the overcoming and integration of the past into the present and of the present into the future. The progress of philosophy can be confirmed by the study of the history of philosophy (see the conclusion of *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*, VI, pp. 646–647) but, strictly speaking, it cannot be deduced or justified historically, since its foundation lies in the dimension of the future, in the certainty, or rather in the ‘faith’ and ‘hope’ (as has been rightly observed concerning Tiedemann’s historical attitude: see Cousin, p. 325) in the perfecting of man *ad infinitum*, which cannot be guaranteed by the historical experience because it concerns the past.

The necessary progress of philosophy through the centuries is a postulate rather than a historical notion; it is a philosophically unfounded assumption, although it is supposed *a priori* and is therefore undisputable in its value, which enables us to view the path of human reason in an organic and unitary way. Indeed, it is a progress which, albeit neither linear nor rectilinear, is continuous and uninterrupted: “Philosophy is distinguished from the worldly realms by the fact that once it appeared before humanity, it never completely waned or decayed; even during the dark European Middle Ages it flourished among the Arabs, even among the ruins of Scholasticism it progressed in Europe. The history of philosophy must therefore describe the uninterrupted progress of reason, in connection, however, with the alternating concentration and extension of the form of thought; hence, it must always take account not only of progress but also the tendency of systems – especially the dominant ones – towards a greater restriction or extension of the power of thought” (I, pp. VIII–IX). Historical reality must be adjusted and conceived on the basis of the idea of necessary progress, not *vice versa*. In the history of philosophy, Tiedemann distinguishes between moments when philosophy is characterized by a greater richness in the problems and subjects treated and other moments when it attains greater profundity and rigour; in the former case, it progresses towards the extension of its range of enquiry, whereas in the latter it concentrates its powers on more limited fields and attains a more precise definition of its object. In the history of thought there cannot be dark periods and bright periods, epochs characterized by progress and other epochs characterized by regression; indeed, Tiedemann does not find these, but he sees, always and everywhere, a constant advance that is oriented towards the perfecting of the human faculty of thought, albeit in different ways.

The idea of the uninterrupted progress of science is also at the basis of Tiedemann’s historical judgements. Each system and doctrine must be understood and evaluated in relation to the impact it has had on the progress of philosophy: “Therefore the merits of each philosopher must be judged on the basis of the effectiveness and rigour of his demonstrations, the tendency of his doctrines towards the extension or concentration of the intellect, and on the basis of their effectiveness in producing discoveries among his successors” (I, pp. IX–X:). Any other kind of

judgement would be arbitrary and subjective.<sup>37</sup> For what is missing in the case of philosophy is that universally valid criterion possessed by mathematics and on the basis of which it is possible to establish the truth or non-truth of a theory incontrovertibly: “[A historian] must not express himself about the truth or non-truth of doctrines, nor must he pass judgement on the absolute perfection or imperfection of systems, but he must only emphasize the progress of reason and the relative perfection of systems. Until critical philosophy has gained credit as the only true philosophy, it is mere arrogance and intellectual despotism to impose it like a constitution on every citizen of the philosophical kingdom and expect everyone to use it, on pain of literary derision. Something of the kind should certainly not happen among philosophers; at least, I would not be able to justify it with any law of pure reason (*mit keinem Gesetze der reinen Vernunft!*)” (III, p. VIII).

The historian’s speculative point of view should not influence his analysis of the systems. This caution, which is cited in *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* against the tendency of the Kantians, characterizes Tiedemann’s historiography with respect to previous historiography too. In the ‘Praefatio’ to the *Dialogorum Platonis argumenta*, Tiedemann disputes the method of interpretation that rests on a *judicium* concerning the philosophical value of the doctrines, because it leads the historian to introduce his own speculative concerns into his explanation of systems (as a representative of this historiographical method, Tiedemann names Rousseau, but he is also clearly drawing an analogy with the methodological criteria and the concerns of Buddeus and Heumann’s eclecticism [see *Models*, II, pp. 408–409]): “When reading philosophers one should not use one’s judgement, nor ask oneself whether the individual doctrines are true or false, nor investigate the character (or disposition) of the conclusions; this would create a small amount of erudition but little advantage, or no advantage at all for the intelligence. [...] Indeed, it is necessary for many things which spontaneously penetrate our minds to be rejected after deeper analysis; and many (other) things which at the beginning we disliked or were too abhorrent to common sense are rejected without sufficient motivation” (*Dialogorum Platonis argumenta*, ‘Praefatio’, p. 7).

The frame of reference by which we should assess the value of a system is represented by a gradual but constant perfecting of science. The order to be followed to make this process of perfection recognizable is not the succession of the schools but a chronological order. In philosophy, as in nature, something seldom appears that is pure and uncontaminated; many doctrines are shared by several schools and indeed the majority of philosophers elaborated their thought regardless of the school

<sup>37</sup>Note a significant parallel between Tiedemann’s historiographical method and his interpretation of poetry. Cf. Tiedemann, *Dialogorum Platonis argumenta*, p. 8: “Haud parvi porro refert, quae a philosopho docentur, ipse invenerit, an aliunde hauserit, nosse. Qui Poëtas commentariis ornant, haud parum inde laudis referent, si poëticarum elegantiarum, ac fictionum fontes aperiant, et, quid quisque invenerit, quid imitando aliunde derivarit, quam possunt accuratissime, doceant: neque enim aliter statui unicuique poëtae pretium ulla ratione potest. Eodem modo in interpretando philosopho versandum etiam mihi existimavi; et quoad fieri eius potest, quid ab aliis acceperit, quid primus dixerit Plato, definiendum”.

they belonged to. A history written according to a division into schools, just like the history of the individual schools, is partial; it neither describes nor accounts for the progress and changes undergone by every science. It is therefore of primary importance to provide an overall view of the philosophical activity which occurred in each period and to reconstruct the stages punctuating the progress of philosophy. Exceptions to the chronological sequence are admitted during the transition from one period to another with the aim of making the account clearer: "In certain periods, reason seems to be driven by a new strength and makes extraordinary progress, and the form of thought as a whole is affected by such changes and previous principles, and all of a sudden ideas entirely disappear, as in Greece during the age of Socrates and in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages. But just as in nature it is not possible to identify anything clear and pure, so forms of thought are transmitted from one epoch to another, and at the beginning of the new period the followers of the old are always active. But since our intellect, on account of the greater clarity and penetration which is proper to it, must distinguish that which nature has not distinguished, it follows that in this case we can abandon the chronological sequence a little and bring the chief representatives of the ancient form of thought back to the previous period. This does not cause any disadvantage because they have not exerted any additional influence on the new period, hence the chain of cause and effect is not interrupted" (*Geist der spekulativen Philos.*, I, p. XI).

The historian must not exaggerate with biographical information and scholarly references concerning the works written by philosophers. One should not confuse the reader to distract him from the main aim, which is an understanding of the doctrines in relation to the advancement of science. Not all those who were recognized as philosophers have the right to be recognized in the history of philosophy, but only those whose influence on the development of knowledge can be ascertained: "We cannot expect [the historian] to portray everyone who is known as a philosopher, however famous he was in his time. His task is to describe the path followed by science; therefore, those who did not exert any influence on science, who did not enrich it with new discoveries, did not revitalise it in a new and concrete way, those who did not greatly hinder its course or did not orient it in a false direction, in short those who followed traditional paths, even though the outer circumstances gave them momentary renown, have no right to be mentioned in a general history of philosophy" (I, p. XII).

As we have seen, the historian of philosophy does not limit himself to compiling a 'chronicle', nor does his task consist of enumerating doctrines, but of describing the progress of science according to the connection of cause and effect. This entails studying the origin of systems, identifying the factors which explain their appearance and the relationship of filiation with respect to the other systems. In examining the causes and effects, Tiedemann particularly emphasises the connections intrinsic in the history of ideas; it is the task of the historian to seek the source of the new systems in the ancient systems, show how the former derive from the latter, and examine how and from which previous ideas and principles they originated, bringing new demonstrations, new ideas and principles (I, pp. XI–XII). Besides the thought elaborated by previous philosophers, there are other factors that determine the spirit

of systems, such as the type of education received, the masters heard, the political constitution, customs, and wealth. The historian of philosophy must be particularly interested in the interweave of political history with the history of science, because the form acquired by the predominant thought in a particular period often depends on the form of government. What is most influential are not the separate historical events, and not even the fate experienced by the different nations, but the history of mankind (*die Cultur-Geschichte des menschlichen Geschlechts*), which displays “the progress of humanity towards its perfecting (*den Fortgang der Menschheit in ihrer Fortbildung*)” (III, p. v). Tiedemann seems much more uncertain in assessing the influence of climate upon the development of philosophy. Over 2,500 years, philosophy flourished under all skies and climates: it thus seems that the climatic and geographical conditions are of little importance.

Up to this point Tiedemann has addressed and discussed the methodological themes relating to the history of philosophy, generally understood as the history of the progress of this science. He now proceeds to define more precisely the theoretical and methodological boundaries of his object of research and solves two questions implied in the expression “history of speculative philosophy”: what does “speculative philosophy” mean? And when does its history begin? As for the definition of philosophy, Tiedemann is deliberately brief and evasive, and even declares that he does not intend to provide any definition in advance, so as not to become entangled in the “two thousand-year-old” question of the proper definition of philosophy, which in recent times has given rise to different parties divided by a mere definition. He prefers to list the disciplines conventionally included in the term “speculative philosophy”, assuming that they are generally acknowledged to be the following: ontology or general philosophy; natural philosophy; natural theology; and psychology.

The theoretical and methodological reasons for this choice, or rather the appropriateness of Tiedemann’s making no predetermined speculative choice, are polemically reiterated against the Kantians, who considered this aspect to be the fundamental defect of his work (see. below, Sect. 9.5.5). As long as philosophy has not attained the form of a “universally valid” system, it is not possible to make the work of the historian of philosophy depend upon a theoretical orientation adopted dogmatically as a standard of measurement. Critical philosophy, which now claims universal acknowledgement and absolute validity, will be soon replaced by other similarly dogmatic and despotic philosophies (IV, pp. VI–VII); but a historian has the duty to be impartial and rightly consider all the systems that are historically given (II, p. VI). Nevertheless, the absence of a preliminary definition which can support and guide historiographical activity does not mean that the historian must lack any idea of philosophy: “I hope that no one will object that without a real definition of philosophy it is not possible to write a history of philosophy, provided that there is an agreement about the objects to be included in this term, just as the early historians wrote the history of states before a well-defined and universally valid concept of state (lacking still today) existed. With no idea of philosophy it is certainly not possible to write its history; and the fact that I have no such idea has not been proven yet. I only wished not to be judged on the basis of an idea of



philosophy and according to an ideal, not to be made to coincide with an idea that I could not accept and which had not yet reached an absolutely universal validity. I think that this is correct; every writer is free to determine what and how much he intends to offer; and nobody can be asked for more than he intends to give and could give according to his concept. This certainly cannot be expected as long as we still have no general agreement concerning the fundamental concept" (V, pp. VII–VIII).

The beginning of the history of philosophy is not a secondary problem to be solved in a slapdash or arbitrary way. A considerable part of previous historiography, and even some authors of Tiedemann's time (see Adelung and Plessing), saw philosophy as emanating from the 'barbarian' peoples of the East and Africa, from where they maintained it came to Greece. By contrast, Tiedemann believes that philosophy, understood properly as a science, is a product of the Greek mind. For this reason, he puts forward the following definition of philosophy: "Philosophy is not merely the collecting of opinions on philosophical subjects, but understanding opinions starting from their foundations, whether they can be derived from concepts or from experiences". (I, p. XVIII). As has been observed, this is a rather general, traditional definition, reminiscent of the Scholastic subdivision into *cognitio ex datis* and *cognitio ex principiis* (see ALZ, 1792, no. 325, col. 534), which, in Tiedemann's view, applied to every kind of school and every trend of thought. Yet, in effect, this subdivision excluded the Eastern and barbarian tradition of thought, and the problem of the beginning of philosophy was structured and resolved in the same terms as those proposed by Heumann, Brucker, and Tennemann. Some form of speculation was also present in most ancient times, but doctrines then had no rational foundation and were taken either from the imagination or from the principle of authority and tradition; therefore, they were not philosophical doctrines in a strict sense: "Opinions of this kind generally belong to the history of the human intellect and to the history of the primal and original construction of human knowledge, not to the history of philosophy" (I, p. XIX).

On the basis of the testimonies available to us – and note that, for Tiedemann, the most valuable of these was Aristotle (see below, p. 678) – Thales was the first to deal with the foundations of doctrines, so Thales and the Ionian school represent the beginning of philosophy strictly speaking. Eastern and barbarian speculation is to be considered marginally or merely indirectly, because of the influence, albeit limited, it exerted on Greek thought. Worthy of greater attention is the speculation formulated by the ancient poets of Greece, who were not philosophers in a strict sense but nevertheless elaborated the first cosmological doctrines, meditating on which the Ionians built their philosophical systems.

The controversy with the Kantians led Tiedemann to present a more detailed analysis of his historiographical theory, addressing issues which were the object of lively debate at the time, such as the possibility of an *a priori* history of philosophy. Tiedemann's methodological choices were better explained and justified precisely because of his confrontation with his critics' theory. Tiedemann saw the presupposition behind the (mostly negative) judgements expressed on his *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* as a mistake typical of the Kantian approach: the Kantians not only made historiographical activity depend on an *a priori* definition

of philosophy, but claimed that they could judge works on the history of philosophy on the basis of an “abstract” idea of the history of philosophy, deduced from the principles of critical philosophy, regardless of the results attained by these works with respect to those that came before. Someone may be a great writer, objects Tiedemann, but still not live up to the “abstract” ideal of a literary genre: “How Homer is inferior to the ideal of epic poetry! And how far the early philosophers – Thales, Pythagoras, and many others – are from the ideal of speculative philosophy! Nevertheless they are all praiseworthy and are great figures for their time and for the sciences themselves” (V, p. XI).

Every work can therefore be examined and judged from two different perspectives: on the basis of an ideal model; and in relation to previous works of the same genre. The first type of judgement is the easiest and quickest and requires no specific competence. Even assuming that Brucker represents the very essence of the history of philosophy (see ALZ, 1796, no. 204, col.12), it is necessary to read the entire *Historia critica philosophiae*, as well as the other historiographical literature, before being able to express a value judgement in this field. On the other hand, the idea of the history of philosophy, on the basis of which various reviewers had censured Tiedemann’s work, was taken without much effort from Kant’s philosophy: “The resulting idea of the history of philosophy, namely, that it is a pragmatic description of the effort (of research) made by the human mind to fulfil the idea of philosophy, certainly did not imply any prolonged or original effort for its elaboration; and we can affirm without hesitation that it is ten times quicker and easier to build this idea than to analyse Brucker’s *Historia critica* and review its contents in order to be able to evaluate another book on good grounds and on the basis of it” (V, p. XIII). Tiedemann thus challenges his critics, inviting them to undertake concrete work in the field of the history of philosophy, rather than limit themselves to formulating judgements on the basis of high ideals; as for himself, he assures us that his work represents the best that has been produced in this field, although he is aware that he has not created a perfect work: “Thank heavens, this illusion has not seduced me yet; I think however that I can affirm without conceit or vainglory that this book contains more than is contained in similar works before it” (IV, p. XVII).

The possibility of an *a priori* history of philosophy is still to be demonstrated, primarily on a theoretical level: it presupposes deducing all the possible philosophical systems from the nature of the human mind, which is its prime source. Tiedemann acknowledges that he has not yet meditated enough on this possibility and declares that he is not ready to conduct further research, since he considers it to be extraneous to the work of the historian of philosophy and fruitless in terms of the historiographical results produced: “At present I will not apply myself to see whether this is possible and in general if this ‘pre-formation’ of reason results in a certain number of given systems, because this research would lead us too far away and, in any case, considering the state of affairs, it would not provide a result acceptable to everybody. However, I believe that, following a common belief, we can state that such a thing cannot be expected from a pragmatic historian. This would imply an explanation of the nature of the human faculty of thinking and a discovery of its innermost structure; it therefore belongs more strictly to the philosophy

concerning the human intellect. Moreover, this would not only be a history of philosophy, but a philosophy concerning this history” (IV, pp. XVII–XVIII). With this separation between the ‘history of philosophy’ and the ‘philosophy of the history of philosophy’ Tiedemann intends to defend the ‘historical’, objective, and descriptive nature of the history of philosophy, thus avoiding the risk that theoretical orientations formulated on the basis of abstract ideals would prevent a direct approach to the historical reality of philosophy, the difference and originality of systems, which are ascertainable only through a rigorous historical documentation.

### 9.5.4 *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*

**9.5.4.1** Of the six volumes which comprise the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* (Marburg, 1791–1797), the first, covering the period from the beginning of Greek thought to Anaxagoras, consists of 391 pages, preceded by a dedication to Heyne (who is described as “verehhrungswürdiger Lehrer und Freund”), a lengthy ‘Vorrede’ on the purposes and method of the historiography of philosophy, and a table of contents, totalling 30 pages. The subject matter is subdivided into 16 chapters of varying length, some of which are intended to provide a historical and political framework, while others concern individual philosophers. The first chapter is of an introductory nature (‘Aelteste Denkart der Griechen’, I, pp. 1–22) and is concerned with the most ancient Greek thinkers, Hesiod and Homer; the second examines the factors which determined the progress of culture in Greece; then comes the treatment of Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Leucippus, Empedocles, Democritus, and Zeno of Elea. Another chapter of a historical nature introduces the transition of philosophy to Athens in Greece strictly speaking; Tiedemann then examines Anaxagoras, the Sophists, Hippocrates, Melissus, and Diagoras. The volume closes with an overall survey of the philosophy produced in the period: ‘Uebersicht dieses ganzen Zeitraums’ (I, pp. 387–391).

The structure of the other volumes is similar: a dedication, a ‘Vorrede’ (which from volume II to volume VI is mainly intended to respond to the criticisms advanced by some reviewers), a table of contents and, finally, the author’s appraisal of the progress made by philosophy during the epochs examined. The volumes are generally dedicated to princes and politicians, except for the first, as we have seen, and the fifth, which is dedicated to Johann August Eberhard, who was a professor at Halle and a historian of philosophy.

The second volume, from Socrates to the new Academy, contains a ‘Vorrede’ of 12 pages and a text of 588 pages subdivided into 13 chapters, the first, the third, and the sixth of which describe the history of Greece from the Peloponnesian wars to the battle of Cheronea, to the formation of the empire of Alexander the Great. The other chapters deal with Socrates, the Socratic schools, Plato, Aristotle, Speusippus and Xenocrates, Pyrrho, Epicurus, the later Cyrenaics, Megarians and Peripatetics, Zeno of Citium, the middle and new Academy.

The third volume, which presents the philosophical culture of the Alexandrine and Roman age, consists of 13 chapters, from page XVI to page 567. Here the historical sections are quite extensive: the Roman conquest of Greece (pp. 1–41), the history of Rome from the constitution of the Empire to its fall (pp. 69–95), and the fall of the Roman Empire and the decline of the sciences (pp. 195–254). The following subjects are addressed: the dissemination of philosophy in Rome up to the end of the republic, Eastern philosophy, the revival of Pythagoreanism, the Cabbalists, the philosophy of the early Christians and the intertwining of Platonism and Eastern thought, the Alexandrine philosophers, Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus, Augustine and Nemesius, Proclus, Boethius, Aeneas of Gaza, and Dionysius the Areopagite.

The fourth volume, devoted to medieval, Arab, and Hebraic thought and then to Scholasticism up until the thirteenth century, comprises a 'Vorrede' of 24 pages and a text of 648 pages subdivided into 16 chapters. After describing the situation in Europe up to the year 1000 and the crisis of the Eastern Empire after the impact of the Arabs, it deals at length with Arab and Hebraic philosophy and John Scottus Eriugena. In chapter VII Tiedemann explains the rebirth of philosophy in the West (pp. 195–249) by presenting the history of the political and educational institutions of the Middle Ages, mentioning in particular the progressive independence gained by the political power with respect to ecclesiastical power, as well as the birth of the urban middle class. A long chapter concerning the philosophers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries introduces the thought of the main representatives of Scholasticism, who are each treated in a chapter: Albert the Great, Bonaventure, Thomas Aquinas, Richard of Middleton, Henry of Ghent, Giles of Rome, John Duns Scotus.

The fifth volume includes both a treatment of the last centuries of Scholasticism and the philosophy of the Renaissance (pp. XXXII–624, 15 chapters). The first chapter presents the history of Europe up to the destruction of Constantinople, emphasising the crisis of the power of the Church and the diffusion of greater freedom of thought in England. The Scholastic philosophers examined are the following: Raymond Lull, Hervaeus Natalis, Francis of Mayronnes, Durandus of Saint-Pourçain, William of Ockham, Walter Burley, John Buridan, Thomas of Strasburg, and Marsilius of Inghen. The beginning of the reform of the sciences is traced back to the arrival of the Greek philosophers in Italy and to the protection given to philosophy by the Medici and the kings of France; but it was the Lutheran Reformation which determined the decisive progress of philosophy (pp. 333–384). These issues are developed in chapters VIII and XI. Tiedemann then deals with the thinkers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: Pierre d'Ailly, Raymond of Sabunde, Dominic of Flanders, Francisco Suárez, then Pomponazzi, the Cabbalists, Theosophists, Rosicrucians, the adversaries of Scholasticism, and the founders of new systems (Ramus, Cardano).

The last volume presents the philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries up to Berkeley; it is preceded by a short 'Vorrede' and consists of 647 pages subdivided into 13 chapters; it ends with a general index of the names and subjects which appear in all of the six volumes (pp. 649–740). After a chapter

providing a historical framework intended to explain “the progress of culture in the West” until the middle of the eighteenth century, Tiedemann describes the great philosophers of the modern age: Hobbes, Gassendi, Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, Wolff, and Berkeley. Other chapters deal with the philosophers who manifested a homogeneous form of thought (the Cartesians) or elaborated the theme of deism, especially with reference to the physical-theological proof for the existence of God (Ray, Parker, Derham, Clarke). It is worth mentioning the ample space given to Scholasticism and medieval philosophy within the organisation of the work: more than 900 of the total 3,500 pages are devoted to the thinkers of the Middle Ages, as many pages as those devoted to the thinkers who lived during the modern age, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.

**9.5.4.2** In the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*, the periodization is important not only for the sake of explanatory clarity but also because it shows the steps in the uninterrupted progress of philosophy. To this end, Tiedemann states, it is necessary to respect the chronological order and come to a definition of the main transformations or epochs, each of which constitutes a section (*Abtheilung*) of the history of philosophy. It is possible to adopt a double criterion for periodization: the history of philosophy can be subdivided in the first place in relation to the great historical and political upheavals which have affected the outer condition and form of philosophy, determining its greater or lesser diffusion and fostering research to a varying extent. This was the criterion of periodization adopted in seventeenth-century historiography and was still used by Brucker, in which the traditional classification of the schools was integrated into the general framework of universal history. The history of philosophy thus appeared to be punctuated by major historical events such as the Flood, the birth of Christ, the fall of the Roman Empire, and the Protestant Reformation.

The other criterion focuses on the inner condition of philosophy (*auf ihren inner Zustand*), that is to say the principal changes taking place in the forms of thought, the advances and the tendencies which have taken place within science itself. The purpose of the history of philosophy, which consists in describing “precisely the progress and the principal forms of growth of the science”, obliges us to choose this second type of periodization, which is capable of clearly emphasising the variation within the history of philosophy: “The outer changes, in the shifting of political power from one region to another, do not always necessarily involve considerable changes within the sciences, although, due to easily comprehensible reasons, in most cases the main changes in the sciences coincide with the main changes in universal history” (I, p. XXXI). Resting on this foundation, the history of philosophy is subdivided into five periods:

1. *From Thales to Anaxagoras*. During this first period, Greece made considerable progress, autonomously and without external influence, moving from popular ideas and fragmentary knowledge to philosophical and scientific doctrines founded on reason. The initial situation was a naive materialism which was resulted from an inability to conceive of the separation between body and mind. There was a transition from the idea of generation, implicit in ancient theogonies,

to the idea of the emanation of one thing from another, starting from an original formless matter (material emanation). With the Eleatics the first distinction appeared between the region of the intellect and the region of sensibility, but the lack of importance granted to the latter resulted in the first form of idealism and a higher form of pantheism, in which the whole was conceived without reference to an analogy with human nature. The pantheism of the Eleatics became the model for the first mechanical philosophy (Atomism), but at the same time, because of the conflict between reason and experience, it led to scepticism. The observation that all motion must have a beginning led to reflection on mechanical philosophy, which, thanks to Anaxagoras, led to deism. This discovery – which was yet to be elaborated, threatened as it was by scepticism on one hand and atheism on the other – brings the first period of the history of philosophy to a close. In order for further progress to become possible the ground needed to be prepared by a general *Aufklärung*.

2. *From Socrates to Carneades*. These three centuries are characterised by rapid and substantial progress in philosophy, making them comparable to the modern age. The outer conditions favouring this progress were political freedom and the absence of religious constraints, which gave rise to a freedom of thought that endured even in the different political conditions that characterised the fourth century. Thanks mainly to Socratic maieutics, progress concerned the philosophical method; with Plato, philosophy learnt to look beyond the sensible and to deduce the sensible from the intelligible; with Aristotle, ontology, the doctrine of the universal principles of things, was placed at the pinnacle of philosophy. During this period the question of the sources of knowledge and its objective validity was clearly formulated for the first time, and the philosophical world came to be divided into sceptics and dogmatics. While the latter initially prevailed, their lack of in-depth research into the sources of knowledge opened the way to the sceptics. The contrast between materialism and idealism led to the victory of deism, which attempted to explain matter and the corporeal starting from the immaterial power of thought. Deism was strengthened by the first rationally based proofs for the existence of God, providence, and the immortality of the soul. During this period a striking development also took place in scientific psychology, which deduced the activity of the soul from a few rational principles.
3. *The Roman Age* (from the second century BC to the sixth century AD). In this period, human reason progressed more slowly than in the previous age. A new system (Neoplatonism) appeared which gradually eclipsed the others; few new principles were discovered, and these concerned the realm of intellectual knowledge. We can see the concentration of reason on only one object, which was thus better analysed and discussed in depth; the great doctrines concerning the existence and attributes of God were thereby rectified and coarse materialism was irrevocably surpassed: "Reason therefore did not remain inactive during this long period, although it progressed slowly. Departing from the systems which had prevailed previously and freeing itself from the prejudices connected to them, it prepared itself to analyse universal and abstract concepts with much greater

care; and departing even more from the images of the senses, it better elaborated the intellectual region and expanded *a priori* knowledge" (III, p. 567).

4. *From the Arabs to the Scholastics.* Chronologically speaking, this is the longest period, during which the intellect remained neither inactive nor regressed, but proceeded, albeit slowly: "From its very beginning, therefore, up to its supreme development, it never stopped rising towards its greatest perfection; the history of the sciences provides undisputable proof that mankind unceasingly approaches the perfection of its noblest powers" (IV, p. 644). No new systems were produced, and this was considered to be an indication of decline; in fact, on the one hand the Scholastics (who all felt deep admiration for the Greeks, were prevented by religious authority from using their freedom of thought, and since their early days were used to elaborating commentaries) did not build any different systems, but they paved the way for the germination of new systems during the modern age. This philosophy therefore has the merit of analysing ideas and elucidating even the most abstract concepts with utmost clarity; and the analysis elaborated by the Scholastics represents the starting point of all great modern systems. Following the method of the Alexandrians and Aristotle, they brought speculative philosophy closer to the form of *a priori* science which was the most appropriate to it. In cosmology, the question of the origin of the world was led towards a solution and a blow was dealt to astrological superstition; natural theology, once free from the excessive abstractions of the Alexandrians, strengthened the proofs for the existence of God and the doctrine of divine attributes.
5. *From the Renaissance to the middle of the eighteenth century.* The last period spans the three centuries since the Renaissance. After the analysis and commentaries elaborated by the Scholastics, a new opposition between systems was required in order for philosophy to progress, new battles which could give rise to the new. The increasing autonomy gained by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the Greek exiles who came to Italy, and the Protestant Reformation represent the three outer conditions which favoured a rupture in the link between philosophy and theology and therefore the assertion of freedom of thought. During the first phase, however, no new systems were found, and old systems, having been long forgotten, were simply re-proposed and embellished. This happened because the men of the Renaissance continued to seek philosophy and ideas in books rather than in themselves and in nature. Men had been used to building through imitation for such a long time that the method used to build had been lost. Yet the sixteenth century laid the foundation for the great progress which took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and which concerned above all the attainment of a greater systematic order connecting the parts of philosophy, the extension of its objects, and clarity and evidence in deductions. At the beginning, the theories that prevailed were materialism and mechanism (Hobbes and Gassendi), later on spiritualism (Descartes), and then idealism (Leibniz and Berkeley). Analogous to this process was the transition from atheism (implicitly defended by materialism) to deism, which was supported by the idealists. Even though philosophical principles have attained greater clarity and systems have

reached solidity, philosophy – unlike mathematics – has not found complete accord with the assertion of the universal and necessary value of only one system. There are two reasons for this:

- (a) a rational criticism of reason (*eine Kritik der Vernunft aus der Vernunft*) has not been attempted yet, and therefore some ambiguity still exists in the definition of ideas and supreme principles and in laying the foundations for the great edifice of philosophical knowledge;
- (b) the difference existing between philosophical systems also depends upon the character of human beings: as long as there are men with a vivid imagination, there will be no lack of Theosophists and visionaries; as long as there are men incapable of elaborating abstract thought, there will be atheists.

**9.5.4.3** Philosophy was born in Greece in the age of Thales; however, Tiedemann devotes an introductory chapter to the “most ancient thought of the Greeks”, expressed by poets and legislators, which contains the seeds of many ideas which were to be developed by the philosophers. Homer and Hesiod’s poetry had no aesthetic purpose and was not intended to be a game, but aimed at strengthening religious belief. Reason was then determined by the senses, conceived of the soul in a confused way and in an analogy with the image of the body, considered all beings to be divine, living creatures, and conceived of the formation of things through the analogy of generation. Theogonies potentially contained both pantheism (because of the deification of nature) and deism (owing to the dependence of nature and its laws on the divinity). It was the task of philosophy to develop these potentialities: “This knowledge spread and established itself imperceptibly over many centuries, and if philosophy had not led to a scientific approach, it would never have raised itself much above this level. This knowledge, integrated with small additions, seems to constitute the extreme limit that the human intellect can reach when left to itself and no longer elevated by the cultivation of an art; this is demonstrated almost without exception by the peoples among whom philosophy, strictly speaking, has never appeared – the Chinese, the Indians, and the Egyptians, whose theogony and cosmogony, in one word their whole metaphysics, except at most for the doctrine of the unity of God, were constrained within these boundaries, and in part still are today” (I, pp. 21–22).

Thales was the first philosopher because he was the first to justify his assertions: “Undoubtedly, Thales thus can take credit for being the first philosopher mentioned in history; a philosopher can and must distinguish himself from the poet or from those who teach religious doctrines only if he puts forward his affirmations not as inspirations from higher beings but as the outcome of his own reflection, not as the fanciful product of pure possibilities but as well-founded knowledge deduced from experiences or from rational concepts” (I, p. 32). The theory that water is the principle of things is not original; ancient legends, of which there are traces in Homer (and which are mentioned by Aristotle in book I of his *Metaphysics*), already sited the origin of the universe in Oceanus and Tethys; but Thales rejected metaphorical and poetic expression and referred to objects of experience. Secondly, and more importantly, he attempted to build his doctrine on foundations, transporting it “from the playful realm of imagination into the serious territory of the intellect”.



Tiedemann deals specifically with each representative of pre-Socratic philosophy, regardless of the school he belonged to, and points out the merits of each in the progress of philosophy. We must limit ourselves here to those figures that represent the key moments in Tiedemann's historiographical picture. In the first place is Pythagoras. With the philosophy of the Milesians, reason had limited itself to the knowledge coming from our external senses. It was Pythagoras, with his theory of the principles of things, who allowed philosophy "to enter the specific regions of the intellect". This theory promoted the effective progress of philosophy, which "for the first time was given a scientific form by means of the search for the supreme sources of all knowledge and the deduction of the rest from these sources; it became what it had to be, an *a priori* science". The sphere of sensible knowledge is subjected to the sphere of intellectual knowledge, at the risk, however, of transforming pure abstractions into reality. This mistake – which Tiedemann points out should not surprise us, since it was to be regularly repeated up to the time of Malebranche – depends on the fact that the essential difference between science and intellect has been neglected: "Until accurate reflections concerning the nature of our knowledge have convinced us that thought and sensations, the fact of representing through images and understanding through concepts, are essentially different, the intellect cannot avoid mistaking general ideas for the objects themselves and giving its abstractions an existence outside itself" (I, pp. 98–99).

With Xenophanes we come to the domain of Eleatic speculation. Xenophanes has a double merit: firstly with respect to rational theology, because he defined God as "supreme nature", the most excellent and perfect nature, and demonstrated his oneness; and secondly, because he clearly enunciated the great principle according to which nothing comes from nothing. In Parmenides' reflection, Xenophanes' principle of the One-Whole loses all reference to sensibility and becomes the pure object of thought. The demonstration of this concept engendered several metaphysical principles, such as the principle of the simple, the immutable, the perfect, through which it was possible to create a higher concept of the divinity. Parmenides was a pantheist, but a better one than Xenophanes, because he refused to provide being with any material and sensible element, and a better one than Spinoza too, because he did not admit the principle of emanation. But the merit of Parmenides consists in having enriched philosophy, which moved rapidly in the direction of science: "He penetrated deeper into the region of the most universal concepts and principles, he enunciated these concepts, opened up the way to *a priori* philosophizing, and he himself, with his extraordinarily subtle sophisms, urged his successors to continue developing these concepts: in short, he raised philosophy higher above the sensible; he has therefore great merits, for which we shall never be grateful enough" (I, p. 179).

Parmenides took the separation between reason and sense to its extreme, thus providing the starting point for scepticism, as demonstrated by the dialectic of his disciple Zeno. But in this way he also opened up the extremely fertile field of research into the reality of our knowledge. Furthermore, since he maintained that truth only concerns being, while the sensible world is mere appearance, Parmenides can be considered to be the first idealist, whose idealism is of a more radical nature

than Berkeley's but less radical than that of Kant (see I, p. 189). The separation between reason and sensibility was first overcome by Leucippus through the concept of the atom, whose attributes are in part those of Parmenides' One, although seen in conformity with experience. Leucippus was the first materialist in a proper sense; although formally not yet an atheist, he was an opponent of all forms of emanation and the author of the first system of mechanical philosophy: "This was therefore the first philosophical system built exclusively on the ideas of the external senses, hence it represented a great benefit for science, because it was thanks to this and to the ensuing research that it was possible to learn to what extent these ideas are enough in themselves to explain experience. The previous systems mixed up the two kinds of ideas arbitrarily; this resulted in a confusion concerning the first principles and a lack of coherence in their conclusions" (I, p. 242).

The transition of philosophy from the outer regions of Greece, its colonies, to its centre, Athens, led to important progress in philosophical thought. In the first place, the concentration of philosophers and all their systems in one place allowed several contradictions to be identified and overcome; secondly, Athens' democratic constitution allowed philosophy to be revived in a political sense, because it was associated with rhetoric: "when power is not able to coerce, then reason and persuasion must exert gentle guidance" (I, p. 308). In Athens, philosophy thus swiftly progressed from childhood to youth. The greatest philosopher before Socrates, as Aristotle assures us, was Anaxagoras. His greatness did not consist in his system for explaining reality, which is inferior to the atomistic system; yet, it was greater than the atomistic system and all those that preceded it because it posited a first cause of the universe with a non-material nature: "We have here the first clear and evident form of deism, which is recognised both by the ancients and the moderns without exception. Any sound thinker can see the greatness and sublimity of the wise man who was the first to elevate reason up to the knowledge of an architect of the world and a rational first cause of motion, who dispelled the ancient fog of materialistic atheism, and who finally perceived that which the sound human intellect had mixed up, and presented clearly and distinctly that which reason had hitherto tried to disentangle in vain. At the same time, the system of dualism appears for the first time; thanks to this, all previous rough emanation is brought to an end and, from this moment onwards, gradually loses its former predominance in philosophy and is confined to the corners of a few individual systems" (I, p. 328).

The second period in the history of philosophy opens with the figure of Socrates, "the wisest and most sublime man among the Greeks", thanks to whom Athens became, in the eyes of nations, "teacher and educator of mankind" (*Menschenlehrerin und Menschenbilderin*). Rational theology made great progress with Socrates. Starting from the observation of the order of the universe and the harmony governing the different parts, Socrates came to posit the existence of an ordering mind and the need for an architect of the world, thus formulating a "physical and theological proof" for the first time (II, p. 32). In Socrates's hands, philosophy was greatly enhanced even from a methodological point of view; according to the testimony of Aristotle, Socrates was the first who "taught us to analyse concepts and, through analysis, to express them with definitions; [the first] who, by means

of examples, clearly explained the method of going back from the particular to the universal, thus teaching reason to proceed with safe, steady steps" (II, p. 43).

Tiedemann's attention is not drawn by Socrates's 'genuine' pupils, but rather by those 'unfaithful' disciples who founded their own schools. Among these – obviously besides Plato – Aristippus of Cyrene is particularly worth mentioning, not only because he was the first to subdivide philosophy into its main parts, but above all because he discussed in depth the question of the certainty of our knowledge. And here there is clearly a critical reference to Kant. Aristippus ascribes certainty to the inner sense while he denies it to external sense, resulting in a new form of idealism that declares the thing in itself to be unknowable: "We can see here in the first place the appearance of the principle common to all idealists, that we only know our modifications, with the consequence, albeit not yet definitely developed, that we thus know nothing about objects as such. This consequence is so clear to the idealists and so weak to their adversaries because it still remains possible for modifications to accord with objects, just like an impression with a seal; and this possibility has not yet been satisfactorily denied by the idealists" (II, p. 58).

Plato is among those philosophers whom Tiedemann analyses most thoroughly and completely. First of all, according to the historiographical tradition, Tiedemann points out Plato's character, his sources, and the particularity of his philosophical attitude. He denies that Plato would have been positively influenced by the doctrine of the Egyptian priests; at most, he borrowed from these a certain "pietistic" attitude, a religiosity related to mysteries and imbued with "enthusiasm", elements which were alien to the Greek way of thinking. This attitude was strengthened by his meeting with the Pythagoreans, from whom, moreover, Plato took a more rigorous way of treating philosophy, and from whom he developed his very definition of philosophy as the science of that which is real and immutable, as distinct from opinion, which concerns rather that which is only partially real. The three basic concepts of Plato's theoretical philosophy are those of matter, idea, and God. Matter and God are original natures (*die Urwesen*), precisely because "nothing becomes from nothing"; but, unlike Parmenides, besides absolute nothing, Plato posits a relative nothing, from which becoming is possible. Matter is a nothing in relation to something determinate; it lacks form and is therefore able to take up all forms. Against the atomistic interpretation of Plato (Cudworth), Tiedemann stresses the incorporeal, purely negative and abstract character of matter in Plato.

One of the crucial points for interpreting Plato is the doctrine of ideas. That ideas are in the intellect is beyond doubt; but do they also have a reality of their own, are they separate substances with respect to the intellect that thinks them? In some of Plato's works (*Phaedo*), ideas certainly appear to exist by themselves, as separate substances, whereas in other dialogues they appear to be models, on the basis of which God operated in shaping things; in the *Parmenides*, Plato says that ideas are thoughts and exist only in the soul. The same contradiction is also present in the ancient testimonies concerning Plato. According to Tiedemann, it is not possible to solve the question with a homogeneous and congruous interpretation of Plato's works: the historian can only give an account of this contradiction by recourse to the specific tendency of the intellect, which, especially during its first

phase and in the absence of an accurate enquiry into the origin of ideas, attributes reality to its own images and perceptions. Plato's discovery of ideas was important, just as the interpretation of ideas as separate entities was sterile and erroneous: "When Plato takes ideas as models according to which the divine mind works, when he therefore lets God operate according to a premeditated plan, this theory shows originality and a high degree of plausibility. Socrates' research into the final causes and the wise arrangement of all things had undoubtedly prepared his broad mind for this theory. He is entitled to the glory of having applied this research to the doctrine of the formation of the world and of having adequately connected them within the only system concerning the origin of the world which appears satisfactory to us. But when he takes ideas as substances and makes the formation of sensible objects depend on their immersion in matter, he becomes entangled in unsolvable difficulties and contradictions: how can this immersion take place without a multiplication of ideas? And, even more, since they are all of a divine nature, without idolatry? Without the deification of the world?" (II, pp. 95–96).

In addition to matter and ideas, the formation of the world requires the existence of a cause, given the principle – first clearly defined by Plato – that everything that comes into being must have had a cause. Plato extended Socrates' theology and developed it further: he can be considered to be the authentic founder of rational theology; he demonstrated the existence of God and the doctrine of the divine attributes in various ways; moreover, he tried to solve the problem of evil in the world first of all by distinguishing physical evil from moral evil and by ascribing its cause to the disorder inherent in matter. The world that results from divine action is the best possible world. Platonic theology had often been interpreted according to an analogy with Christian and Neoplatonic theology. Tiedemann denies any conformity between the Trinitarian concept of Christianity and the Platonic idea of divinity; the second letter to Dionysius, whose authenticity however is not certain, "demonstrates only whatever one wants to demonstrate". Yet, in Plato there are passages in which the Neoplatonic emanation of the intellect and of the soul of the world from God-One is anticipated or at least foreshadowed. This depends upon the aforementioned contradiction of separate ideas: "Here Plato contradicts himself, and this must necessarily happen because he admitted contradictions in his theory of ideas. Whenever he takes these ideas as substances, he attributes eternity to them; but when he considers them as expressions of thought, he makes them derive from the intellect; he cannot therefore avoid being accused of accepting the intellect as a particular substance emanated from God" (II, p. 126).

Aristotle was the greatest Greek philosopher, not only because of his wide-ranging knowledge and vast erudition, but because of the systematic attitude that permeated his philosophy, and the perspicacity and depth of his analysis. The form he imparted to philosophy was the form which was to prevail through the centuries: "For the Greeks he became the legislator of philosophy; the order in which he arranged concepts, the form he gave to the whole, remained unchanged and saw all the other forms disappear in time" (II, p. 213). The most important development introduced by Aristotle concerned the place assigned to prime philosophy or metaphysics, namely, that part of philosophy which, using modern terms, might

be called ontology or general philosophy: “Without making an effort to subject the most general concepts of our intellect to adequate research, theoretical philosophy is simply not possible as a science; without this effort, knowledge and certainty of the supreme principles of thought in its entirety are not possible. Therefore, we are indebted to Aristotle for our metaphysics more than to any other of the ancients, because he attempted to base the entire edifice of speculation on a solid foundation, thus bringing poems and physical novels to an end and preparing reason for a demonstrative view of these objects. By this very means, theoretical philosophy has become increasingly separate from the images produced by fantasy, and knowledge as a whole has become more intellectual, in such a way that Aristotle has the exclusive merit of having raised Greek philosophy from the fancies of childhood to the vigour and splendour of youth” (II, p. 247).

For Aristotle, priority must be given to the study of substance, because substances come first and accidents afterwards. Among the characteristics of substance, Aristotle emphasised its logical value, sometimes forgetting that substance, in order to be such, must also be an object of sensation. This gave rise to several mistakes, such as when, in response to the question of what can be defined as substance, he replied that form is substance in a more proper sense than matter. Form is essence, quiddity, that which the intellect grasps in the definition of things, hence in this regard similar to Plato’s ideas. Aristotle does not completely depart from Platonism but rather adopts a middle way between Plato and the materialists: “The philosopher from Stagira was not able to find a way out of this confusion because he did not yet know the two fundamentally different ways of considering things – according to the pure concepts of the intellect, and according to the concepts of experience and of the external senses. However, like his great master, he was used to judging objects mostly according to concepts of the intellect, and his doctrine continued to show a strong inclination in this direction; thus he could not help but call form substance and deny all real determination of quality to matter, which here appears to be pure subject. On the other hand, however, since he wished to avoid the evident exaggeration of substantialising general concepts, he tried to deny them an existence separate from matter, thus following a middle way between Plato and the materialists” (II, pp. 232–233).

Despite a greater rigour in its proofs for the existence of God, Aristotle’s rational theology seems to be inferior to that of Plato. Some of the divinity’s fundamental attributes, such as providence, do not appear to be clearly stated. This is due to the predominance of the naturalistic spirit, which in psychology, for example, leads to subtle enquiries into the faculties of the soul and to an almost complete neglect of the problem of immortality: “Hence, Aristotle’s doctrine is not complete atheism or a complete denial of all providence, although it is only separated from atheism by a thin line, since God is granted the smallest possible influence over the world. As a careful student of nature, Aristotle was so used to addressing his attention to natural laws and powers that he paid less attention to God’s intervention; only the need for a first moving cause restrained him from denying the divinity completely. Another reason his doctrine comes close to atheism is because it considers God merely as a force, a form of the world that inhabits the world; but what keeps it

away from atheism again is the fact that this force is represented as a thinking one, supremely perfect, and, just like the *summum bonum*, not pervading the whole world nor immanent in all its parts; this distinguishes it from pantheism too. According to the sense intended by its author, this system is half way between atheism, deism, and pantheism, although not chosen according to its most appropriate form" (II, pp. 298–299).

Among the great philosophical systems of the classical age, Tiedemann regards Epicureanism as the least interesting; it took up a doctrine (Atomism) which was proper to the preceding age. Epicurus "did not see a handbreadth beyond his predecessors, the Ionians and the earlier philosophers" (II, p. 381). Moreover, Epicurean theology is nothing more than "idle talk". The Epicurean system represents a form of regression compared with the level philosophy had reached with Aristotle; the only form of progress which should be ascribed to Epicurus is that leading to a consolidation of materialism and atheism. "That which Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle had striven to build with great acumen, namely, a system resting on *a priori* concepts and principles; the pure concepts and principles of the intellect that these great men, with enormous effort, had tried to derive from the chaos of representations and sensible images; that which, after a long, fruitless search, these heroes of speculative philosophy had found out in their floundering, namely, a system whose essential parts would satisfy the intellect: well, Epicurus strove to demolish all this and replace a more intellectual system with a purely sensible system. His system includes the most extensive endeavour to show to what extent gross materialism (*der grobe Materialismus*) can provide a satisfactory explanation for phenomena and resolve the most important problems of our reason" (II, p. 402).

Stoicism is materialistic too, but it is distinguished from Epicurean materialism by the fact that it admits, as a cause of the universe, an active power which is called *logos*, reason. The Stoic position is half way between Epicurus' blind materialism and Plato's dualism. However, the most remarkable part of Stoic philosophy is rational theology: none of the ancient philosophers defended the existence of the divinity with so many sound arguments. Tiedemann lists seven proofs, mainly reported by Cicero and Sextus Empiricus: of these, the fourth improves the Aristotelian proof of motion, the fifth contains the seeds of the ontological proof, and the seventh is similar to the physical theological proof. Stoicism therefore presents a physics that inclines towards materialism and pantheism and, at the same time, a rational theology of a deistic nature. These points of view are incompatible, and indeed they gave rise to the conflicting interpretations of the Stoic system which have been elaborated so far: some have considered it close to Spinozism, whereas others have compared it to deism. The task of the historian is simply to note the contradiction implicit in the system: "The safest attitude is to leave the contradiction just as it appears and consider the *Stoa* as belonging to the intermediate category of those philosophers who do not really know what they affirm and, yet, because of their sentiments and religiosity, incline more towards deism, unaware that there is the danger that any religion may destroy their physical principles" (II, p. 539).

The period that extends from Carneades to the Arabs and coincides chronologically with the gradual predominance of Rome and its empire is distinguished from

the previous period by the slower progress of philosophy: a certain innate laziness began to prevail, so that it seemed sufficed to preserve the knowledge already acquired; indeed, as happens with anything which loses intensity the more it extends itself, so the interest in the progression of thought and culture diminished just as it became more general and widespread. Rome predominated in the Mediterranean area, but in Rome philosophy and science did not find suitable ground for their development. Even when philosophy penetrated into Rome, it never became a fundamental occupation or the only focus of interest: Cicero concerned himself with philosophy only during his leisure hours, and others, like Atticus, only approached philosophy for personal pleasure. The crisis of philosophy became more serious from the second and third centuries AD onwards. The Roman Empire, which over time had become a military dictatorship, came to be increasingly besieged by the barbarian peoples. Another cause for the decline of science was the spread of the Christian religion. It is certain that, on one hand, Christianity gained advantage from the philosophical enlightenment which had damaged the local religions, which consisted of superstition and cults; but, on the other, it turned to philosophy not in order to extend rational knowledge but for its own ends. Through time, “the growing spiritual power, together with the fanaticism of the Christians, almost completely crushed sound intellect” (III, pp. 105–107).

Throughout this period, the most important philosophical system was Neoplatonism. “Considering the conditions of the period, it was the most excellent system that reason was capable of producing and quite a few still consider it to be pre-eminent over all other philosophical systems. This is the surest form of proof that it contains constitutionally something that is engraved in human nature and is in harmony with the purest concepts” (III, p. 264). The main direction followed by the system has an Oriental origin and consists of the search for union with the divinity, which Plotinus calls ‘ecstasy’. The first principle, the One, is that which really exists, the most real essence (*das allerrealste Wesen*); all of reality descends from the One according to the degrees of emanation. Evil, like matter, has its explanation in the sense of deprivation and darkness, which is nothing in itself, is an abstraction of the intellect, a mere capacity to receive forms. Life and activity lie in the soul, matter itself is an emanation of the soul; “it arises from mere thinking on the part of the soul”.

For Tiedemann the Plotinian system as a whole is pantheistic and Spinozistic; but he accompanies this negative judgement with a series of acknowledgements concerning the importance and historical value of Neoplatonism. The ambivalence of his judgement is due to the fact that he adopts a twofold point of view with respect to the past of philosophy: on one hand, as a philosopher, he contests and refutes the irrationalistic, mystical, and pantheistic outcomes of Neoplatonism; but as a historian of philosophy he has to judge the historical meaning of this system, a meaning that proves to be positive both as regards the influence it exerted on the philosophy of the following period and in relation to the whole context of the history of thought, since Neoplatonism favoured extreme clarity and precision in the concepts and principles of the intellectual world, which was built on the basis of the ideas elaborated by the inner sense: “Plotinus therefore teaches a rough form of Spinozism (*grober Spinozismus*) when he reduces everything to parts

of the divinity and makes them be the first matter manifested to us in infinite forms through the different types of change. He teaches a more subtle form of Spinozism (*feiner Spinozismus*) when he reduces God to the logical subject of all the multiplicity that becomes manifest through experience and intends to deduce the sensible in its entirety from intellectual concepts" (III, p. 429). Tiedemann continues his judgement: "This system, leaning towards intellectual concepts, and despite its inclination to *Schwärmerei*, offers fundamental advantages to reason and places philosophy on one of its principal pillars. Conceptual arguments and *a priori* proofs must provide science with its primary solidity and its ability to be applied to all other knowledge and to strengthen our knowledge of that which lies beyond our present experience, of God, of the nature of things in general, and of thinking essences in particular. By referring to experience only to a limited extent and by deducing everything from concepts, this system promoted *a priori* knowledge and improved the ability to formulate *a priori* arguments. Its great influence and its long life gave philosophy a totally new direction and prepared it for what it was to become during the modern age" (III, p. 431).

Tiedemann tends to neglect Christian philosophy of the early centuries. The reason for this lack of interest lies in the fact that we are looking at theology rather than research of a philosophical nature. Indeed, Saint Augustine was the first among the Fathers of the Church to possess a genuinely philosophical spirit, whereas his predecessors, from Justin to Origen, either neglected philosophy or transformed it into religion itself because they deduced it from the revealed books. By contrast, Augustine was able to define the boundaries of both disciplines, speaking of philosophical things in a philosophical way and of theological things in a theological way (III, p. 456). However, the originality of Saint Augustine's thought is not great: "The basis of Augustine's philosophy is represented by the thought of the Neoplatonists; he quotes these philosophers several times, highly praises them, and gives their doctrines pre-eminence over other doctrines; in elaborating most of his doctrine, it is beyond doubt that he follows them and acknowledges that he managed to find in them many elements similar to Christianity" (III, p. 460).

During the third period of the history of philosophy, the most significant moments are represented by the thought of the Arabs and, above all, Scholasticism. The transition to the new period was marked by historical conditions that exerted a twofold influence on science, at first negative, then positive. The barbarian invasions of the West and the expansion of the Arabs in the East led to the temporary disappearance of classical culture, but it was the Arabs themselves who were the first to instigate a revival of philosophy; subsequently, in the West, the progressive strengthening of the spiritual and political power of the ecclesiastical hierarchy constrained science within the limits fixed by theology, but the remains of the classical culture were preserved precisely by the monasteries, and the fact that the Latin language was maintained in religion encouraged the revival of European culture. The conditions for a greater and more general *Aufklärung* were created by the formation of towns and the establishment of an urban bourgeoisie that sought independence from both the feudal and the ecclesiastical power. Tiedemann deals with Arab thought only briefly, even though he recognises its importance, because



the works of the philosophers – which can alone permit a reconstruction of the progress of a science – were unavailable or available only to a limited extent. Scholasticism is dealt with at greater length. He begins by looking at the concept of Scholasticism, because fixing the beginning and naming the representatives of this trend of thought is only possible after we have established its distinguishing features in relation to the previous and subsequent philosophical currents.

Each philosophy is distinguished by a certain matter and a certain form. The “form” of Scholasticism is absolutely original: it consists of the method of “addressing each question and all subjects relevant to it on each opposite side and raising all possible objections, something which had never happened previously and was never to happen again to such an extent. Therefore, after the conflicting arguments are presented, the solution is given according to predetermined rules and laws that are recognised everywhere regardless of the arguments brought and without considering their weight as the only criterion for establishing the solution” (IV, pp. 336–337). The arguments, objections, and reasons for and against were not intended to corroborate or confute a doctrine, but only to strengthen a certain system of doctrines, making it unassailable on all sides. This system was initially represented by a certain theological system, then by the doctrines of the Fathers, and finally by Aristotelian philosophy. Obedience to the principle of authority and dialectic as a method of enquiry therefore represent the “formal” elements of Scholasticism, which in this regard depends on the spirit of the age, on the submission of theology to religious authority: “This spirit entered philosophy through the hierarchy; indeed, after the spiritual and papal power had laid down a religious system and had forced it on everyone, after the separate parts of this system had attained the clarity needed, reason was not allowed to budge an inch from it, and hence it could do nothing other than either lapse into inactivity or take on the function of defending this doctrine against every possible and conceivable doubt” (IV, p. 337).

As regards the “matter”, the originality of Scholasticism is less remarkable: indeed, it devoted itself to *a priori* research, as philosophy had done from the Eleatics onwards; yet, its peculiar feature is that it defined its concepts according to Aristotle’s sense. With these characteristics in mind, Tiedemann defines Scholasticism as “that type of *a priori* treatment of objects in which, after a presentation of most arguments for and against in a syllogistic form, the solution is taken from Aristotle, the Fathers of the Church, and the dominant system of faith”. It is now possible to solve the question of the origin of Scholasticism too: the dialecticians (Roscelin, William of Champeaux, and Abelard) were not authentic Scholastics because they dealt with logic and not with metaphysics. Peter Lombard was not a real Scholastic because he was a theologian and not a philosopher. Scholasticism appeared after the diffusion of Aristotle’s works, in particular the books of metaphysics, thus not before the beginning of the thirteenth century, because “only then was that method extended to all metaphysical research, only then was the Aristotelian solution followed in particular, only then was philosophy separated from theology and brought back within a much broader context” (IV, pp. 338–339).

The originality of this interpretation of Scholasticism does not lie in its listing of those elements which, according to Tiedemann, define this trend of thought:

seventeenth-century Lutheran historiography and Brucker had already identified the essence of Scholasticism as 'dialectic', subordination to the principle of authority, and a mania for Aristotle, and they had bitterly condemned it. What is original in Tiedemann is his fundamentally positive judgement of Scholasticism, which constitutes an important step in the development of human knowledge. The birth of modern philosophy (criticism of the principle of authority and the formation of new philosophical systems) was made possible by the analysis carried out by the Scholastics concerning the supreme metaphysical principles, by philosophy's acquisition of the ability to carry out in-depth analysis and adopt a demonstrative rigour which it gained thanks to the disputes of the Scholastics, however "useless and ridiculous" they might have seemed. The Enlightenment itself owes much to the Scholastics: indeed, the overcoming and the criticism of Neoplatonic philosophy started that process of the rebirth of reason which, during the modern age, made it possible to conquer superstition and mysticism. "The Scholastics", observes Tiedemann, "received from the late Greeks and then from the Arabs an ontology, a theology, and a general physics which were limited, resting only on the perceptions of the inner sense, and inclined towards mysticism, pantheism, and tending to defend all superstitious belief in magic, astrology, and spiritism. It was a very difficult undertaking, something almost impossible, to free itself from these extremely narrow labyrinths and adapt concepts more to experience, and it was particularly difficult for unexperienced men, who were then leaving barbarism behind. During the long centuries of Scholasticism, reason applied itself to this undertaking, thus essentially preparing modern philosophy; indeed, all the questions addressed by the medieval philosophers and their sects aimed at removing this refined intellectual mysticism little by little" (IV, p. 647).

Among the Scholastic authors (whom Tiedemann analyses separately, presenting their most original doctrines taken from the texts themselves), special emphasis is placed on Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham. Other thinkers, who had been critical towards Scholasticism or who seemed to anticipate some of the issues addressed by modern philosophy, and who, for this reason, had been re-appraised by previous historians, are somewhat neglected here: this is the case of Raymond Lull, whose much praised *ars magna* "conceals, under the mask of deep wisdom, nothing other than a pitiful tautology" (V, p. 66). The treatment is therefore not centred upon the least Scholastic philosophers or upon those who were critical towards Scholasticism, hence not upon Roger Bacon (who is not even mentioned), but precisely on the typical great representatives of Scholasticism and, above all, Thomas Aquinas. This "venerable man" was a great commentator on Aristotle; he studied Greek assiduously and, totally devoted to Aristotle's philosophy, added his own personal reflection and uncommon intelligence. Besides his commentaries on Aristotle, his theological works, as well as some shorter treatises in which the originality of his thought is better expressed, show that "he was a man endowed with special strength and extraordinary perspicacity applied to the most abstract research and that he compensated for some of [Aristotle's] flaws, made concepts clearer, and gave conclusions a new effectiveness. [...] His expression is extraordinarily clear and

his style contains much more grace and purity than we can possibly find in his contemporaries and his successors" (IV, pp. 477–478).

The last period, which leads philosophy from the Renaissance to the present age, began in Italy thanks to the Medici and Pope Nicholas V, who took in the Greek exiles who were to disseminate greater knowledge of classical philosophy. But the luminaries soon abandoned Italy, which during the second half of the fifteenth century was caught in an economic and political crisis, and emigrated to France, where the monarchy was strengthening and engendering both despotism and patronage. The most significant historical and political event of this period, which Protestant-inspired historians had indicated as a decisive element even with reference to the history of philosophy, was the religious Reformation. Tiedemann certainly expresses less enthusiastic and uncritical praise of the Reformation than authors like Tribbechow or Brucker had done before him (or the French author Charles de Villers was soon to do),<sup>38</sup> although he is ready to acknowledge that it was advantageous for the cultural ascent of Germany, "which, after having long been a disciple, raised itself to the level of a master during the sixteenth and the following centuries" (V, p. 333).

On one hand, the Reformation was the consequence of the enlightenment that disseminated through Europe during the fifteenth century. The power of the Catholic hierarchy, which played on the ignorance of the people, began to look suspicious to the learned and even to many ecclesiastics, who now overtly maintained that it was more important to restrain the pope than the Turks. The Protestant Reformation was therefore the result of the general crisis in which Christianity found itself at the beginning of the sixteenth century and from which it might have escaped if the power of the pope had been restrained by the councils, as was a tradition in the Church. Tiedemann misses the true religious meaning of the Reformation: he is more interested in shedding light on the political aspects than in describing the new surge of religiosity that Protestantism bore with it. Indeed he is convinced that if Christian theologians and philosophers had gathered in a democratic assembly, after the fashion of the French constituent assembly, the theological conflicts would have been resolved: "Unfortunately, the astuteness of the popes blinded them and succeeded in postponing the councils and only rarely convening them, just for the sake of intrigue. What wonderful flowers the freedom of thought might have rapidly put forth if it had been governed or defended by the authority of universal and democratic assemblies made up of theologians and if the workers in the field of reason, the philosophers, could have voted in them as well!" (V, p. 340).

Philosophy would come to benefit from the Reformation indirectly: It threw off the yoke of authority and introduced the courage needed to attempt to build new sys-

<sup>38</sup>Cf. Ch. Villers, *Essai sur l'esprit et l'influence de la réformation de Luther* (Paris, 1804), p. 358: "L'esprit humain est affranchi et de la contrainte extérieure que lui imposait le despotisme hiérarchique, et de la contrainte intérieure, de l'apathie où le retenait une aveugle superstition. Il sort tout-à-fait de tutelle, et commence à faire un usage plus libre, par conséquent plus énergique et plus convenable, de ses facultés"; p. 361: "Ainsi par son action directe, et par sa réaction, la commotion religieuse opérée par Luther entraîne les nations européennes en avant dans la carrière des connaissances et de la culture intellectuelle".

tems; above all, “it nourished the spirit of autonomous thought, which the hierarchy, as happened in Italy, would have otherwise soon demolished again”. While Scholasticism died out in the regions conquered by the Reformation, it persisted in Catholic countries, where it continued to produce some major philosophers, like Francisco Suárez, who was pre-eminent “thanks to the influence he exerted on modern metaphysical systems as well as to his truly philosophical mind” (V, pp. 386–387).

The conditions allowing great progress in philosophy were all already present in the sixteenth century, but no original systems were formulated at that time. The sixteenth century sowed the seeds which, properly cultivated, brought about an exuberant new flourishing of philosophy during the seventeenth century and those that followed. These ‘seeds’ were the use of writing paper together with the spread of printing, geographical discoveries and advances in navigation, improved welfare and the expansion of commerce, and freedom of thought as a consequence of the Reformation. These fundamental conditions were complemented by other factors, which, during the two centuries that followed, brought the sciences to unprecedented heights: the birth and diffusion of scholarly journals, the introduction of the postal system and the frequent exchange of letters, an interest in the sciences among statesmen, the birth of scientific academies, the diffusion and development of the universities, and the institution of copyright.

The first great philosopher of the modern age was René Descartes: no one before him had succeeded in contrasting *Schulphilosophie* with a system capable of gaining general approval. Descartes was one of the most profound and ingenious thinkers that philosophy has ever seen: his chief merit lies in having reformed philosophy as a whole, by directing his attention to the entire edifice of speculative philosophy, although perhaps neglecting the internal articulation of its parts. This made him similar to the great philosophers of Antiquity and different from the Scholastics who used the “microscope” in philosophy. Tiedemann’s judgement on Descartes is therefore extremely positive: “It is not up to us to evaluate whether the Cartesian system is highly valuable if considered as a system of truth, which is a criterion adopted only by the moderns: as long as there is no certainty concerning what can be the best and the only true edifice of philosophy, we lack any universally valid touchstone. It is enough therefore that Descartes has clarified concepts, linked them better, and increased their quantity and provided arguments with greater effectiveness! He has at the same time, therefore, brought reason closer to its goal, and this always represents the true and lasting merit of any mortal with respect to philosophy” (VI, p. 105).

Although Descartes himself was not responsible for this, the Cartesian school gave rise to two forms of pantheism: Malebranche’s mystical occasionalism and Spinoza’s metaphysical pantheism. Descartes provided the method for Spinoza’s philosophy, while the contents came from the Cabbalistic system of emanation. Spinoza’s philosophy is an attempt to provide the system of emanation with the rational appearance and philosophical justification that the Cabbalists could only dream of. From this point of view, Spinoza’s philosophy engendered progress in philosophy, since it oriented reason towards clear, rigorous principles with regard to a particular system of knowledge: “However, it is beneficial – and even

indispensable – for human reason for such rigorously systematic thinkers to exist, so that it can thoroughly and clearly evaluate the consequences of all kinds of principles and therefore judge every system and principle all the more correctly” (VI, p. 213). But Tiedemann immediately counters this positive assessment of Spinoza with criticism; this judgement is not only aimed at the content of the system, which fundamentally coincides with the rough pantheism of the Cabbalists, but concerns the geometrical method itself, which certainly lent rigour to the system but as a result made it difficult to read and ambiguous to interpret, as is demonstrated by the fact that Bayle often misunderstood it.

A similarly ambivalent judgement appears when Tiedemann approaches the question of Spinoza’s atheism: if atheism is understood as the explicit denial of God and religion, then Spinoza is not an atheist; he becomes one if atheism is understood as a position in which the distinction between God and the world, creator and creature is denied. Tiedemann then attempts to distinguish the position of deism – his own philosophical position – from Spinozism with regard to religion: “This divine cult [of Spinoza] is certainly far behind the religion adopted by the deist: the Spinozist owes nothing to an autonomous decision made by his God, nothing to his free will, and does not hope for anything from a free decision made by his God; he therefore cannot nourish the same degree of gratitude and love towards him as the deist does” (VI, pp. 242–243).

Locke is undoubtedly one of Tiedemann’s favourite writers, and he frequently uses him for his historiographical interpretations. However, Tiedemann’s judgement on Locke clearly shows the influence of Kant, in particular the influence of those parts of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in which the English philosopher is mentioned. Locke’s problem is rightly to examine the power of thought in order to overcome scepticism and philosophical controversies. But he did not fulfil his goal because he missed the very essence of metaphysics and its *a priori* progress, since he claimed that he could derive all its principles from experience. Furthermore, he did not study the foundations of mathematics deeply enough and did not come to an understanding of the Platonic and Cartesian argument in favour of innate ideas, whose purpose was to protect their value of truth and universality. “*A priori* knowledge”, observes Tiedemann, “was therefore completely contrary to Locke’s point of view: he failed to grasp that it is precisely that knowledge that constitutes the chief part of philosophical objects. Therefore, since in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* he thoroughly neglected this form of knowledge, his critique of reason inevitably proved defective and unsatisfactory; and it was not possible for metaphysics to derive the same usefulness from it that it might have gained through the settlement of old disputes” (VI, pp. 264–265).

Among the modern philosophers, Leibniz receives most of Tiedemann’s attention (twice the amount of space as that devoted to Descartes and three times the space reserved for Locke). His greatness consists in having created the most complete system of philosophy, which makes him comparable to Aristotle. The sources of Leibniz’s thought are extremely wide-ranging and diverse, ranging from the Scholastics (whose metaphysics and general philosophy or ontology he

adopted as his own) to Plato, and up to the Alexandrians and the modern mystics (like Böhme) from whom he adopted emanation, the concept of substance, and innate ideas, but against whose *Schwärmerei* he was protected by the mechanical philosophy of the moderns. The coherence of Leibniz's synthesis depends upon a perfect knowledge of the positive and negative aspects of each of these philosophical perspectives: "Leibniz knew the systems of the ancients and the moderns in detail and was able to identify their most evident faults correctly. From all this matter, which he collected from all sides, by integrating the flaws of a system with another system or through its own inventions, his ingenious mind shaped a philosophical system lying happily between the dreams of Platonic ideas and the atomistic hypotheses of Democritus and Descartes, between Alexandrian mystical spiritualism and Cartesian mechanism, between the Platonic and Cartesian philosophy of the intellect and Locke's philosophy of sense. It was a system which satisfied, or seemed to satisfy, the most important requirements of reason concerning the theories, and which therefore met with the approval of almost all parties" (VI, p. 370). Leibniz represented the exact opposite of Locke: he was a great genius of metaphysics but he did not manage to endow his system with sufficient solidity because he overlooked the epistemological question, namely, the problem of the sources and the limits of knowledge. Leibniz adopted the theory that only the representations of the inner sense are real and that all concepts and ideas deriving from external sense are nothing but phenomena referable to the representations of the inner sense, but he failed to test this. "What is missing in Leibniz's system is a preliminary critique of reason (*fehlt es an einer vorausgehenden Vernunftkritik*)".

Although a pupil of Leibniz, Wolff was an original and astute philosopher, and Germany is indebted to him for its supremacy in Europe in the field of philosophy. Like Leibniz, he loved ancient philosophy and the Scholastics, but he managed to build an entire system of theoretical philosophy that was better than Leibniz's, and on some points he integrated and corrected his great predecessor: "The fact that he followed the path laid out by Leibniz cannot be ascribed to his lack of genius, just as the fact that a careful traveller follows a more well-defined route cannot be ascribed to a lack of attention" (VI, p. 519). A negative aspect of Wolff's work is his use of the geometrical method, which he systematically applies in his Latin works. Philosophy is not directly concerned with figures and intuition, and brevity and geometrical rigour are not always useful for understanding concepts. Wolff falls for the same illusion as Descartes and Spinoza: he believes that the geometrical method can lend universality and objectivity to philosophical knowledge and put an end to disputes. What is missing in Wolff is precisely that which could have served as a basis for this universality, namely a critique of reason: "Therefore, although the system is the most complete, valid, disciplined, profound, and the best of all the systems examined so far, it still remains uncertain and defective in its primary elements" (VI, p. 522).

Berkeley, a contemporary of Wolff, developed a form of idealism which was much more radical than that of Leibniz and Wolff. Compared with materialism, idealism is less appealing and less in accordance with the common way of thinking; however, both systems possess the same degree of plausibility; the former favours

the ideas of sensation, the latter the ideas of reflection. Consequently, it is useless to oppose idealism by referring to common sense; indeed “this would constitute non-philosophical, if not to say irrational, behaviour”. Berkeley can take credit for having shown, through the unilateralism of idealism, the other more dangerous form of unilateralism, that is to say, materialism. The merit of idealism lies in this confutation of materialism, to which common sense is always willing to give credit, but not in the confutation of scepticism, as Berkeley claimed, because, on the contrary, “precisely the contrast between these two types of perception has become more evident thanks to the idealists” (VI, p. 625).

For Tiedemann, philosophy came to a dead end towards the middle of the eighteenth century: all possible systems had appeared one after the other during the last century and a half, the last of which was Berkeley’s immaterialism; but none of them had managed to prevail and reach the form of indubitable and absolute knowledge, that was possible in mathematics, and that could bring all disputes to an end. As we have seen, this is due, on the one hand, to the character of man which is reflected in the form of his speculation, and, on the other hand, to the absence of a rational critique of reason, or rather to the fact that this critique has not yet been completed. But, in Tiedemann’s eyes, what matters is the comprehensive picture of the path followed by reason through its history; and from this picture he derives the certainty of the existence of uninterrupted progress, hence the certainty that the future will be more happy and enlightened. The work closes with a profession of faith in the progress of human reason: “The history of speculative philosophy, viewed as a whole, shows us a joyful perspective (*eine erfreuliche Aussicht*): human reason, once awoken, has never stepped backwards, nor has it remained totally inactive; on the contrary, it has never ceased to grow uninterruptedly through the centuries. [ . . . ] Along the entire course of this history, there is no century without a famous philosopher, or without an increase in rational knowledge. Reason proceeds irrepressibly and incessantly (*unaufhaltsam und unaufhörlich*), this fact is evident; it inclines toward that which ennobles and enriches it: this is a historical truth (*Geschichtswahrheit*). And what a truth! How comforting and reassuring! Especially today, when mountains of difficulties and immensely powerful oppressors seem to fight against it! But let us be confident: it won and it will win; and nothing will stop the great movement of things towards what is better, in the world of he who is supremely good. If therefore philosophy has not yet attained perfection and a desirable solidity, let us not give up hope that it will be able to attain them. [ . . . ] That progress advances slowly is taught by all this history; what right have we, then, to lose hope? Should we not rather strengthen our hope in a happy future? One day or another, this happy future will become real!” (VI, pp. 646–647; the whole conclusion is translated into French by Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, pp. 187–190; cf. also Gueroult, II, p. 361, who compares this exaltation of the progress of history with Condorcet’s optimism, even though it comes from other sources).

**9.5.4.4** Tiedemann does not give a value as such to historiographical theory; and, although he writes in the same period as that in which Fülleborn’s *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie* was published, he does not intend to enter into the debate initiated by the Kantians concerning the concept of the history of philosophy.

The theoretical reflections that open the first volume have a methodological function, and their primary purpose is to clarify and justify the criteria according to which Tiedemann conducted his work. As Tiedemann had cautioned, the historian must not quote long passages from the works of the philosophers, and he need not necessarily use the words used by the authors; what matters is not a “chronicle”, the extrinsic description of a philosophy, but to reconstruct the system, that is, on one hand, to define the foundations on which the doctrine is based, and on the other, to connect all the elements within the unity of the system. This methodological rule is not original: Buddeus and Brucker in particular had already used it as the principal canon of their historiography. In this research, Tiedemann does not depart from the Kantians either, who also believed that the primary task of the historian is to establish the ‘system’.

In Tiedemann’s view, reconstructing the system means identifying the fundamental principle that was the philosopher’s starting point and, by deducing the intermediate concepts, outlining the overall picture of a philosophy according to the order given to the doctrines in the author’s mind, or at least the order in which the connection established appears more natural and convincing. This latter procedure is the most frequent, due to the condition in which the philosophers’ texts have come down to us, especially those of the ancient and mediaeval philosophers. This is also true of Plotinus: “We should not expect to find method and systematic order in Plotinus’s writings; considering their origin, they cannot be present in them. In order to obtain a certain view of the whole it is therefore necessary to collect the general principles and that which belongs to general philosophy or ontology from unconnected passages. For Plotinus and his followers, such a supreme principle is that everything derives from a single principle or a single essence, however much it may be in opposition and in contradiction to it. Indeed, however hostile they may be to one another, all animals are still animals; everything that is non-animal belongs in any case to a single genus. From here it is possible to go back to that which exists and finally to that which endows everything with existence. On the contrary, it is possible to descend from this One, through division, to the inferior genera” (III, pp. 283–284). As we can see, the first part of the system is taken up by an account of general philosophy, which consists in defining the principles which can be applied to all genera of objects. This is followed by an account of the contents of the system, that is, in its reference to objects; in the case of Plotinus, ontology precedes psychology and theology.

The search for systematic coherence must not go so far as to remove every contradiction contained in the various systems. In the doctrines elaborated by the philosophers there are mistakes which the historian has to identify, not gloss over or justify, as in the case of the Platonic concept of matter. “Some interpreters of the ancient systems”, observes Tiedemann in this regard, “adopted the principle that all interpretation, when it leads to a contradiction with other doctrines, is inexact; this would mean that no philosopher ever contradicted himself and that it was not inevitable for the first researchers into these abstract objects to fall into contradiction. Precisely for this reason Plato contradicts himself here; a perfect absence of form does not subsist within certain schemes which have always been



present in matter. This contradiction is common to all those who accept matter devoid of all form and nevertheless consider this matter to be extended and corporeal, because an extended and solid essence cannot be thought without a figure and without a figure in its parts" (II, p. 80).

The historian's task is above all to present the system, but then also to explain it. This means discovering the connection linking the causes and effects which account for the rise of certain systems in certain epochs and for their succession. In the first place, there are causes that are internal to the very history of thought. As we have seen, these are the causes to which Tiedemann gives greatest credit: the connection between the different philosophies, the development and increase in the level of knowledge, and the reoccurrence of the same conceptual elements, albeit variously modulated. What matters, therefore, is no longer the personal relationship between the philosophers – the typical master-pupil relationship on which historiography organized 'by schools' was based – but the analogy or opposition between speculative choices, which explain the affinities, resemblances, and antitheses between systems, as well as the revival or abandonment of certain trends of thought. It is not possible to establish the historical succession of systems in its entirety because of our imperfect knowledge of the human mind and its modes of functioning, but in some cases it is possible to identify a "natural" line of development, such as the common tendency shown by ancient pre-Socratic and modern philosophy: the materialistic pantheism of the Ionians is followed by the idealism of the Eleatics, whereas during the modern age Hobbes' materialism is followed by Descartes' spiritualism and finally by the idealism of Berkeley and Leibniz.

The historian is concerned to emphasise the similarities and differences between the different philosophical conceptions, which are well-defined in number and whose general features recur through the centuries: pantheism, materialism, idealism, dualism, emanationism, Spinozism, spiritualism, scepticism, and Manicheism. Owing to his speculative and polemical interests, Tiedemann focuses his attention in particular on the different forms of idealism. We have seen how different Berkeley and Kant's idealism is from that of Parmenides; another form of idealism is that of the Cyrenaics; and finally, Berkeley's idealism is different from that of Leibniz. Clearly, the idealism that Tiedemann considers to be the most satisfactory is moderate idealism, that of Parmenides in Antiquity and that of Leibniz in the modern age, because this idealism is less radical in excluding ideas originating in our external senses from the sphere of knowledge: "However, this idealism [Berkeley's] differs essentially from Leibnizian idealism: it is true, for Leibniz, that no body is real, but bodies are still something more than mere representations, in their place there is something that is similar to them, something that produces their ideas within us. According to Leibniz, there are certainly only monads or simple substances, but not only spirits; finally, according to Leibniz, neither an infinite spirit nor a matter operates in us, but all representations develop out of ourselves. Leibniz therefore accords greater reality to our sensations, to representations and concepts" (VI, pp. 643–644).

The external causes which may affect the course of the history of philosophy are the 'circumstances' in which the authors lived, the political and economic history,

and the environment. Among these three factors which exert an external influence on the various systems, Tiedemann favours the relationship of dependence – which is indeed neither automatic nor binding – of the history of philosophy on social and political history. For this reason, each period of philosophy is introduced by one or more chapters providing a general framework, where Tiedemann presents a survey of the most significant historical events, to derive from this a number of indications concerning the progress of the sciences. He pays particular attention to the form of government in ancient Greece up to Pericles, then to the transition which took place in Rome from republic to empire and finally to military dictatorship. As for the Middle Ages, he lays particular emphasis on the relationship between Church and State and the gradual strengthening of the national monarchies to the detriment of the power of popes, according to the belief that an authoritative but not despotic government, free of ecclesiastical ties, is a positive condition for the development of culture. He also devotes particular attention to economic and social history: in the Middle Ages, for example, Tiedemann considers the appearance of the middle class to be the principal condition determining the rebirth of intellectual studies and the arts as well as the great period of Scholasticism. But he does not always correctly integrate the events of political history with the history of the sciences. He initially describes the historical and political conditions at length, that is to say, the external environment within which the philosophers operated and elaborated their theories; he then puts forward the theories and scientific discoveries, although at times he fails to properly establish the connections with the political conditions he had previously described. At times, one gets the impression – indeed, an impression or fear shared by the author himself (III, pp. V–VI) – that we have two distinct and independent historiographical perspectives, only generically juxtaposed, as in the case of the economic and political decline of Italy during the second half of the fifteenth century and its incipient cultural decline (see V, pp. 265–266).

As we have seen, the most important and original methodological rule concerns the general criterion according to which doctrines are evaluated: their worth does not consist in the supposed truth contained in them, but rather in their greater or lesser capacity to affect the “progress” of the sciences. This choice of method is based on a philosophical attitude that borders on scepticism, namely, the conviction that, despite all its efforts, philosophy has not yet reached the level of objective and necessary knowledge. Of interest therefore are not the doctrines or systems as such, but the progress of philosophy through the centuries, in relation to which any speculative position represents a temporary and partial phase. Within the overall historical picture, all philosophies are given positive consideration because, albeit in different measures, they have all played a role in the progress of science. Several schools which had traditionally been the object of criticism – such as the Neoplatonists, the Arabs, and the Scholastics – are thus revived. The application of this rule, however, was to prove more problematic than the author had perhaps expected. Indeed, Tiedemann did not succeed in renouncing or totally leaving aside his own philosophical beliefs: on the contrary, he even objects that he has a speculative position of his own against those who accuse him of being a historian rather than a philosopher (V, p. VIII). As confirmation of this, it is sufficient to

mention the negative judgement on Epicurus (see above, p. 664), which presumes that philosophy must be “*a priori* science”, and hence presupposes a certain concept of philosophy (which is fundamentally Platonic and Aristotelian), despite Tiedemann’s precautions not to be conditioned in his judgement by a predetermined speculative view.

Indeed Tiedemann’s philosophical vigilance is constant, as we have been able to observe both in the case of his recurring polemical remarks against Kantian idealism and in his continuous recourse to Lockean epistemology, in particular to the distinction between the ideas of sensation and the ideas of reflection as a criterion for explaining systems. Most of the pages of the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* are nothing more than rigorous exercises in philosophical criticism: the central part of the chapter concerning the ancient Sceptics, for example (II, pp. 344–363), is devoted to the presentation and confutation of the ten arguments brought forward by Sextus Empiricus in favour of scepticism – argumentations that are meticulously demolished, as in the case of that concerning the possibility of fixing a criterion of truth: “The mistake in [Sextus Empiricus’] conclusion consists in the fact that two different criteria are speciously mixed up, namely the criterion of truth and the criterion according to which the dispute over the criterion must be solved; however, it is manifestly clear that the criterion of truth is something different from the rule according to which the dispute over its existence is brought to a conclusion” (II, p. 357). In some cases, the criticism formulated by Tiedemann borders on mockery, as in the case of Epicurean theology: “The weakness of these arguments is so evident as to appear laughable; we almost have the impression of hearing a Greek of the age of Homer or an inhabitant of the Kamciatka philosophizing about his gods. Even Cicero does not neglect to show their absurdity to the point of smiling at it” (II, p. 386).

For Tiedemann the history of philosophy provides, or should provide, the very foundation for making judgements on the philosophical systems. The standpoint of the historian of philosophy can be said to be a privileged vantage point: he is at the end of a process and is able to embrace the entire path followed by philosophy and the sciences. Using subsequent acquisitions, he can evaluate the imperfections of the previous systems; all improvement is relative and destined to be surpassed by the next form of philosophical reflection. What we deem mistakes are therefore nothing but defects of the intellect in observing and judging, which the development of reason enables us to correct. In this regard, the considerations concerning the system of Anaximenes are characteristic: “From the clouds there flows rain, hence air becomes water; plants and animals develop out of water; consequently earth develops out of water. This is undoubtedly an astute principle, considering the level of knowledge at the time, and more acceptable than that of Thales; however, it is highly unsatisfactory and inconsistent if considered on the basis of our research and experiences! What a deduction! Clouds develop *in the* air, hence *out of* the air; and yet, how natural it is, and almost inevitable for a confused intellect, inevitable, at least, as regards the principle used for resolving all difficulties: *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*! Worms, frogs, and toads, are born *in* mud, and hence *from* mud; worms and flies are born *in* the bodies of dead animals, and hence *from* dead animals;

newborn humans and four-legged creatures start to breath, cry, and live in the air, hence they have life from the air; this is how an intellect concludes on innumerable occasions, when it has not been made vigilant by repeated false steps, which happens under all regions of the heaven!" (I, p. 65).

The category of 'anticipation' acquires special importance from the point of view of the progress of philosophy. Tiedemann takes care to point out the first, still obscure, intuitions elaborated within deism, from Heraclitus to Anaxagoras, the first research of an epistemological nature conducted by the Eleatics, and the first formulations of the proof for the existence of God which were already present in the thought of the pre-Socratics. Of course, there is always growth and development, and so any form of revival takes place on a higher level. Let us take, for example, that part of Plato's theology which, defining the world as the effect of a perfect cause, anticipates the Leibnizian principle of the best world: "Plato is the first here to produce the supreme principle of the best world with great effectiveness, a principle which was to be so richly developed by later philosophers, although not as clearly as Leibniz was to do many centuries later. The great man failed to apply it to the individual cases due to a lack of clear concepts and an adequate knowledge of nature" (II, p. 128).

The idea that there is a "growth" and a "maturing" of knowledge also appears from the analogy between the history of human reason generally understood and the development of the individual mind. For this reason Tiedemann has frequent recourse to observations of a psychological and pedagogical nature, such as when, with reference to the mistakes implicit in Heraclitus' physical theory, he describes the positive function of mistakes: "On a large scale, this appears to be a law of human nature, just as it appears to be such, on a small scale, for the nature of children; and after exhausting all the possible mistakes, it perceives and preserves truth more quickly and more clearly" (I, p. 205). Even more often, especially in the history of ancient philosophy, Tiedemann makes use of observations of an ethnographical character, of the experience of modern savage peoples, whose degree of cultural development is similar to that of the Greeks in the age of Homer: "What the young are in their intellect is that which all adults were and still are today, for their field of experience, observation, and reflection is limited. Let us not think that reason grows together with the body and that men of the same age must also possess the same knowledge. The testimonies regarding the ideas and opinions of some primitive peoples indisputably teach us that these statements and the like contain the most serious, literally the most precise belief of the Greeks; after the arrival of the Spaniards, the inhabitants of Ispaniola [Haiti] proclaimed them to be the true children of the gods and of the sun (just as the natives of Mexico proclaimed them their Incas)" (I, p. 5).

Another significant aspect of Tiedemann's historiography is the fact that he read the works of the philosophers directly, before presenting a summary and their principal arguments. The basis of his historical analysis is not constituted by indirect testimonies or by later interpretations, but rather by the works themselves or, in the case of ancient thinkers, by fragments, whose authenticity is ascertained in each case. This rule not only applies to the major philosophers – Plato and Aristotle,

Descartes and Leibniz – but to all philosophers, even those who are only briefly mentioned, such as the Scholastics, whose lengthy treatment is the result of the fact that Tiedemann adds a systematic presentation of the works written by each of them. Tiedemann owes his concern for the direct reading of the texts to his philological knowledge. This knowledge, which he learned from the school of Heyne, was also behind his study of the sources of ancient philosophy, which he develops in his introduction to the first volume. The problem of the sources fundamentally concerns the remotest history of philosophy, namely, the period that extends from Thales to Socrates, which Tiedemann defines as “the fabulous age of philosophy” because it lacks not only texts written by the philosophers but also contemporary testimonies, and because of the contradictory nature of the fragments preserved. It thus becomes necessary to trust in a safe guide, who can serve as a compass, guiding us through the sea of contrasting statements. It is a prerequisite that this guide possesses certain qualities: he must be “the most ancient writer, the greatest expert on ancient systems, the most accurate inquirer into the theories developed by his predecessors, and the most profound, acute philosopher” (I, p. XXII). For Tiedemann (as for Meiners) this man could be none other than Aristotle. Although Plato is more ancient and almost as great a philosopher, he cannot be an equally reliable guide, because the references he makes in his works to ancient philosophers are fragmentary and incomplete.

Tiedemann confutes the criticisms that had been aimed at Aristotle as a source by a long historiographical tradition – namely, that he had been a falsifier who wanted to belittle the reputation of his predecessors so as to appear greater than he was – observing that these criticisms had not been formulated by Aristotle’s contemporaries but, a few centuries later, by the Neoplatonists, who intended to take up the doctrines of the Pythagoreans, falsifying them in their own way, and therefore lessened the importance of Aristotle’s testimony. After Aristotle, reliable sources are Cicero and Sextus Empiricus, in this order. Later authors, the Church Fathers and above all the Neoplatonists, who lived in an age when “cold reason had been replaced by blind enthusiasm” (I, p. XXIII), must be accepted only when their testimonies accord with that of the authors mentioned above and can thus be used to develop, deepen, or comment on the relevant reference. Diogenes Laertius, Pseudo-Plutarch (the author of the *De placitis philosophorum*), and John Stobaeus, who until only a few decades earlier had been considered the best sources in the historiography of ancient philosophy, and are now pushed into the background.

When comparing the various ancient testimonies, Tiedemann almost always sides with Aristotle, “the most ancient and venerable investigator of ancient doctrines” (I, p. 58), as in the case of the interpretation of Thales’ God or Anaximander’s infinite, which Clement of Alexandria had distinguished from matter: “As he does in most cases, our friend Clement derives an inexact consequence here from an exact premise; since Anaximander calls God the infinite, it is not necessary for him to distinguish him from matter as well, all the more so because the most ancient and certain testimonies report that he did not distinguish him” (I, p. 59). As for Pythagorean philosophy – against Brucker, who, adopting Porphyry’s criticisms, had underestimated the testimony of Aristotle – Tiedemann affirms: “Therefore, the philosopher from Stagira is and remains here the principal and most certain guide,

all the more so because no discrepancy has been found between him and the other certain sources" (I, p. 92). Between Sextus Empiricus, who assimilates Pythagorean numbers with Plato's ideas, and Aristotle, who separates Pythagoreanism from Platonism more distinctly, Tiedemann obviously follows Aristotle (I, p. 104).

References to modern historiographical works are fragmentary and never conclusive in confirming a particular theory. Tiedemann takes frequent quotations from Brucker in order to clarify and distinguish his own interpretation, but only very rarely to confirm specific information or arguments. Clearly predominant are the quotations from the original works and testimonies: the chapter on Heraclitus (I, pp. 194–223) contains around a hundred citations from ancient authors (above all Aristotle, then Diogenes Laertius, Clement, Pseudo-Plutarch, Stobaeus, Sextus Empiricus, Simplicius, Origen, and Plato) but only one reference to Brucker, one to Cudworth, two references to Olearius, and one to Heyne, the latter two being the authors of essays on Heraclitus. The chapter on Bonaventure (IV, pp. 447–474) contains one reference to Brucker and about twenty citations from the works of Bonaventure himself.

Tiedemann takes care not to be pedantic. The historian must not display his erudition, he must be comprehensible and convincing, he must not tire his reader, and principally he must not intimidate him by using abstruse technical words and expressions quoted in the original languages. For this reason, he never cites passages from the works of the philosophers, even in translation, and the main arguments are reported in the plainest style and according to the clearest and most immediate form of expression. What matters is not to be faithful to the words, but to the concepts thought out by the authors (see the caution by Garve, mentioned above, Intro., d). Doctrines must be explained using the most current philosophical language, as in the case of the Aristotelian concept of the soul as the form of the body, for example: "To clarify it better, and in conformity with our philosophical language, we might say that the soul is the principle, the foundation of all the vital actions of an organic body" (II, pp. 301–302). In addition, Tiedemann frequently uses witty remarks in an attempt to enliven his text, as when, speaking of Pythagoras, he observes that for the Greeks of that time it was as fashionable to travel to Egypt as it is now for the Germans to travel to France (I, p. 70).

Tiedemann is clearly annoyed by the excessively technical, esoteric language used in philosophy in recent times by Kant and his followers. He accuses critical philosophy of terminological ambiguity and insists on relating the word "pure", used by the Kantians as an equivalent of *a priori* (non-empirical), to the ambit of the ideas of the inner sense (III, p. x). This also explains his prejudice against the geometrical method, which had characterized modern philosophy from Descartes to Wolff. As for the philosophical and historiographical methodology adopted by Tiedemann, let us cite a significant passage in which he attributes the primary cause of the obscurity and contradictions as well as the misapprehensions encountered by Spinoza to his geometrical method: "Yet, all things considered, it seems that [the geometrical form] has caused damage rather than advantage. Damage to Spinoza himself; indeed, besides his considerable effort to render his propositions in a

mathematical form, he naturally forgot to provide them with greater clarity and precision on some points; the effort he made in demonstrating made him forget something that is just as necessary: illustrating and exemplifying. This is an evident disadvantage for readers of his book; indeed, this mathematical form, where every word and explanation requires extreme attention and where what has been read must be preserved with the utmost precision, leads to great annoyance in studying this system, and represents a considerable obstacle to its comprehension. A freer form of expression allowing for repetition, digression, comparison, and some embellishment to the phrase, would have undoubtedly greatly helped the reader and facilitated comprehension, the difficulty of which is proved by the fact that even great thinkers like Bayle and others were not able to understand its sense" (VI, pp. 214–215).

**9.5.5** Tiedemann's work has been regarded as the most important and characteristic expression of the historiographical activity of the later German Enlightenment. Prepared by a series of monographs and sectorial works, in which Tiedemann refined his methodology and collected his sources, the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* was the first extensive history of philosophy after Brucker's *Historia critica*. It had the effect, at least as an indirect consequence, of reawakening an interest in Germany in works on the historiography of philosophy of a general character with far-reaching aims. Tiedemann repeatedly pointed out the novelty of his work, thus giving rise to a debate which was to be decisive for the later development of historiography. Because of the highly animated nature of the debate, which soon slipped into polemic and invective, the interlocutors were not always able to grasp the essential elements of Tiedemann's production, which we can summarize schematically as follows: 1) the primacy of the philological and critical approach with direct reference to the works examined; 2) ample space devoted to the historical and cultural background; and 3) an analysis and assessment of the doctrines with reference to the progress of the human intellect – this progress is conceived of as the transition from a "rough and sensible" condition to the development of the ability to formulate theories and systems that are gradually more subtle, abstract, and *a priori*.

Indeed, Tiedemann's early writings on the history of philosophy had been welcomed as the beginning of a new phase in the historiography of philosophy. Historians of philosophy had so far been "men of letters and philologists": this was said, for example, of *Griechenlands erste Philosophen*, and the result was that the history of philosophy, especially ancient philosophy, had remained obscure and uncertain. Writing the history of philosophy required the competence of a philosopher who was also capable of placing himself in the spirit of Antiquity, who therefore must have a thorough knowledge of ancient languages and an established familiarity with the sources. Tiedemann possessed all these requirements: "Professor Tiedemann's numerous writings reveal that he possesses a philosophical, thinking mind and that he is a sharp investigator of the truth: his *System der stoischen Philosophie* as well as his other essays on the history of ancient philosophy clearly prove that he has a vocation for work in this field, where there are still many crops to be harvested. We therefore have to accept this new product of his research into the history of

philosophy, favourably prejudiced; we have to recognize that our expectations have been perfectly satisfied and that this work is much better than the aforementioned *System der stoischen Philosophie*, which here and there revealed a certain lack of clarity, order, and precision. Here we always find not only traces of assiduous diligence in gathering the materials and a wide-ranging culture both concerning the sources and the works of his predecessors, but also a clear view in judging as well as in the order and choice of the objects contained" (ADBibl., 'Anhang von 37. bis 52. Bd.', II, pp. 1222–1223; see also GGZ, 1781, no. 19, p. 153, where Tiedemann is compared with Bayle because of the importance he attributes to critical and philological precision).

The judgements formulated on Tiedemann's major work were very different, undoubtedly more complex, but not as positive. According to its author, the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* was to distinguish his authority as a historian of philosophy and represent a point of reference for the development of studies in this field. But the work was not received in this way: the only exception, as might have been expected, was the Göttingen review, which appreciated Tiedemann's work, pointing out the precision of his research into the history of philosophy and the breadth of the sources collected, as well as his effort to elaborate a "scientific" treatment of this history: "It is to be noted that we are speaking here of the history of philosophy as a science (*als Wissenschaft*), not of the history of each idea and its origin. [...] With particular accuracy [Tiedemann] explains the link connecting doctrines and concepts and does not limit himself to relating what has been thought but tries to show why and how it could be thought" (GA, 1791, no. 23, pp. 226–227). When presenting the second volume, the same reviewer did not conceal his (and Tiedemann's) irritation at the relative lack of success of the work among the general public (see GA, 1792, no. 3, p. 22).

What weighed against the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* was certainly the fact that its author belonged to the ranks of Kant's declared opponents, in a period (the 1790s) when German culture was totally imbued with critical philosophy and, at most, efforts to go beyond Kant moved in more "idealistic" directions, precisely the direction that Feder, Meiners, and Tiedemann had most vehemently tried to oppose. However, we should also acknowledge Tiedemann's limited skill as a polemicist, and his excessively heated tones when engaged in polemic, which prevented him from recognizing that, in truth, the judgements were not always as biased as they had appeared to him. Finally, let us add that, concerning certain methodological and interpretative questions, he remained ambiguous, whereas he might have defended them better if he had accepted a discussion on the level of historiographical theory (which his critics had invited him to do), instead of limiting himself to claiming his originality as a historian (in comparison with Brucker, for example) and the seriousness of his work. Tiedemann refused to engage in the theoretical problems relating to the historiography of philosophy, which were then considered important in the philosophical debate itself; this contributed to depriving his work, which was admired on a historical and documentary level, of that contemporary philosophical value he rightly aspired to.



As an example of the reception received by the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*, let us take the series of reviews published in journals which were mostly oriented towards critical philosophy and which Tiedemann directly targeted in the prefaces to his work. Tiedemann's work, observes the reviewer in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, has appeared at the wrong moment; 25 years earlier its success would have been greater than it actually deserves. The reason for this is clear: this history of philosophy contains no trace of the Kantian revolution, which has divided the philosophical world into two opposing parties; it will therefore inevitably dissatisfy the friends of critical philosophy without awakening the enthusiasm of its opponents. Tiedemann claims that he distinguishes himself from previous historians because he regards historical sources not as data but on the basis of the criterion of the "rationality" of doctrines and the influence exerted by them in promoting the development of the human mind. This claim is unfounded because it is expressed by a historian who believes he can write a history of philosophy without having defined the essence of philosophy in advance. The very title of the work appears contradictory, or at least ambiguous: the expression "speculative philosophy" is taken as a synonym of 'theoretical philosophy', but it only includes those disciplines that strictly constitute metaphysics (ontology, cosmology, psychology, and rational theology), while excluding pure logic and the principles of ethics, even though they form part of theoretical philosophy. Hence the title of the work should have been *Versuch einer Geschichte der alten Metaphysik* (ALZ, 1792, no. 325, col. 530).

Tiedemann, the reviewer continues, has emphasized the need for impartiality in historical judgement. However, there is an evident absence of partiality in his work which is not the result of the author's intellectual openness, but the uncertainty and superficiality of his philosophical point of view: "A professional philosopher must take sides at least as regards his basic concepts; he must make sure that the side he supports is coherent and complete, that is to say he must shape it in the form of a system, so as to avoid fluctuating between certainty and uncertainty, sense and non-sense, and consider these fluctuations themselves as the flexibility and impartiality of his philosophical mind. More particularly, a historian of philosophy cannot avoid addressing the question of the sources of human knowledge and the foundation of philosophical knowledge; he must give a definite answer, which cannot be taken from documents and historical sources, but requires a preliminary study of the question itself" (col. 531). The reviewer gives examples, showing the possible solutions to the epistemological problem, from which the four different systems derive: critical philosophy (Kant), Scepticism (Hume), empiricism (Locke), and rationalism (Leibniz). The philosophical consciousness is the recognition of these possibilities, and the history of philosophy shows the temporal progress of this consciousness: "Only he who possesses these *fundamental concepts* can find a foundation to philosophical knowledge, and therefore the possibility of philosophy as a science and a true history of philosophy. He alone is capable of showing clearly how reason *has thought and should think the ultimate foundations* on the path towards science, through the different degrees of its development" (col. 532).

Tiedemann reacted against this indication of a method (which was explained in a condescending and patronizing way)<sup>39</sup> by again stressing the need for impartiality in the historian on one hand, and on the other by seeing the premise of a dogmatic treatment of the history of philosophy in the Kantian system and its claim to universal value (see above, pp. 647–648). However, the problem raised by the critics not only concerned the question of impartiality of judgement or lack of it, but also the need for judgement to have a philosophical foundation. The terms of the debate were clearly defined by the author of the reviews of vol. III and the volumes that followed, which appeared in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* (and were written by a different reviewer from the first): “Without expecting the historian of philosophy to choose a particular system as a basis and to consider it as the only philosophy (a form of nonsense that had never occurred to the reviewer) this reviewer submits to the author’s careful consideration the question of whether it is possible to write a history of philosophy without an idea of philosophy as a science, to which all real philosophemes are related, just as that which is related to that which must be; whether, without this, it is possible to define the content of the history or to describe the progress of a science; and, consequently, what principles constitute the basis on which the truth of philosophical systems can and must be judged?” (ALZ, 1796, no. 204, col. 10).

Tiedemann had refused to place the degree of truth of the doctrines among the criteria of evaluation: these had to be evaluated only according to their influence on the “progress” of philosophy. But how can we speak of the “progress” of philosophy, it was objected, without the concern to know what “philosophy” is? By refusing to face this problem, it was maintained, Tiedemann denied himself the possibility of resolving the central problem of the history of philosophy, defining its contents and limits. This “lack” was emphasized by another review whose attitude was even more hostile to Tiedemann (and to whom Tiedemann reacted in the ‘Vorrede’ to vol. V): “The reviewer does not know whether someone expected the author to work according to a system taken as a basis, but he does know that this requirement would not be at all philosophical; indeed, one must not judge according to what a man has taught, even if he was Kant or Leibniz, but according to pure reason. But the reviewer cannot understand how Tiedemann can state that he wishes to write the history of philosophy without a particular concept of philosophy. The idea of the history of

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<sup>39</sup>Tiedemann’s work is not only criticized for its method and content, but also its style: the reviewer invites him to ask a friend – more experienced than him as a writer – to correct the stylistic and grammatical imperfections; see ALZ, 1792, no. 327, col. 547: “Undoubtedly, the subsequent parts of this valuable although quite imperfect work would have been considerably improved if mister Tiedemann had removed these and other similar imperfections concerning expression, among which we should also reckon words like: *entfreyheitet*, *Allgötter* and *Onhgötter*, *Widerwärtigkeit* (instead of “logischer Widerspruch”), *Einkehrung der Seele in sich*, *Leitvorstellung*, and had removed them availing himself of the skilful refining work done by a friend experienced in the grammatical and aesthetic aspects of our language”. An excessive use of archaisms is also pointed out in GA, 1791, no. 23, pp. 227–228, where, however, the reviewer observes that this is merely a “formal” defect which does not destroy the “intrinsic value” of the work.

philosophy consists in a pragmatic description of the effort (or the attempt) made by the human mind to fulfil the idea of philosophy. So how is it possible to write such a history *without an idea of philosophy*? Without an idea of philosophy, who is capable of distinguishing, amid the materials collected, that which is *remarkable* or *interesting* for philosophy? Who is capable, without this idea, of giving his account unity and internal coherence?" (APh, 1795, no. 149, col. 1190).

The defence given by Tiedemann (vol. V, 'Vorrede': see above, pp. 649–650) is easily countered. His claim to be free from philosophical preconceptions is merely a story; he is certainly not Bayle, the only historian capable of assessing all systems impartially. But, from a philosophical point of view, Tiedemann's judgements are well oriented and do not express the attitude of an impartial historian: "Mr. Tiedemann is not totally immune from preferring a system when he assesses opinions; this is precisely the reason why his judges, who adopt another system or do not adopt any system, do not always agree with his judgements. Indeed, we could be satisfied if this evaluation had been appropriately separated from his account of the doctrines, although the reader would prefer Tiedemann to refrain entirely from judging the opinions he presents and limit himself to describing them faithfully. Indeed, what we perceive in his judgements is simply Tiedemann's philosophy, which we do not wish to learn here" (APh, 1796, no. 4, col. 653).

Tiedemann retorted that if his work was judged according to the category of progress (in this case, progress in the field of the genre of the history of philosophy), then it would appear much more interesting and its qualities would stand out in comparison, for example, with Brucker's *Historia critica*. Some responded ironically to this claim (see APh, 1795, col. 1189), while others took up the challenge. The reviewer of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* drew a parallel between Brucker and Tiedemann which was not totally in the latter's favour. His work is certainly preferable on account of the choice of materials, his criticism of the sources, and his reading of the original texts of the philosophers (notably those of the Middle Ages), but if one wishes to know the state of philosophy in a certain period, then the *Historia critica* contains more information and offers a clearer overall view (ALZ, 1796, no. 204, col. 10).

Tiedemann's conviction that his work had been underestimated and that his endeavour, so little appreciated, must be interrupted (see vol. VI, 'Vorrede'), was not entirely unfounded.<sup>40</sup> The general assessment of *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*, apart from the expressions of respect for its author, confirms this negative impres-

<sup>40</sup>This impression is confirmed by a biography published in *Der neue deutsche Merkur*, by Karl Wilhelm Justi: "The public would certainly have obtained other excellent contributions from him, perhaps even another outstanding work, if he had not become irritated and frightened because of the cold and adverse reception encountered by his *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*, a work which – despite some defects, in particular with reference to expression – draws directly on the sources, hence will remain unequalled within its category and will certainly be employed attentively and diligently. Occasional attempts were made to mitigate the criticisms concerning the last parts (of the work), but the initial unfavourable impression was not cancelled, so Tiedemann preferred to stop the publication after the sixth and last volume" (NTM, 1803, p. 363).

sion: "With this volume the famous author concludes a work which, despite its not entirely correct project and a number of mistakes in its fulfilment, nevertheless, thanks to its erudition and acumen, it will occupy a respectable place among the German works on the history of philosophy and will ensure the fame of its author in posterity. It represents the outcome of the most accurate study of most of the works of the philosophers and their particular opinions; it is for this reason and for its greater maturity in judgement and acumen that it should be preferred to Brucker's work. The author must therefore have been greatly surprised to read here and there, as he says in the 'Vorrede' [to vol. VI], that in the field of the history of philosophy nothing has been produced since the time of Brucker; a judgement which, providing it was really formulated (the reviewer cannot recall having read such an opinion), may have arisen either from ignorance or from great partiality and must therefore have provoked such a degree of annoyance in the author as to induce him to set aside his pen without completing the work. The reviewer is persuaded that this *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* cannot rightfully claim the title of a history of philosophy, but he is very far from denying this work of all merit, and considers it indispensable for every historian as an extremely rich collection of materials and incisive reflections concerning speculative philosophemes" (ALZ, 1799, no. 67, col. 532).

The generation of historians who immediately followed Tiedemann judged his work with greater attention and interest. Tennemann was obviously the first among these, since he succeeded Tiedemann to the chair of philosophy at the University of Marburg and, furthermore, was the author of a monumental *Geschichte der Philosophie*. The essay cited more than once, the 'Uebersicht des Vorzüglichstens, was für die Geschichte der Philosophie seit 1780 geleistet worden' (published in PhJ in two instalments between 1795 and 1797) gives prominence to the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*. Tennemann's judgement is well-balanced: Tiedemann has rightly fixed the external limits of the history of philosophy, excluding Oriental thought; he has taken his material from the sources which he has examined critically; he has not only read the most famous works of the philosophers, but also the vast, long-neglected philosophical literature of the Church Fathers and the Scholastics; he has tried to grasp the philosophical significance of the doctrines, presenting them according to the connecting system declared by their author or, when there are no clear indications, according to the order that these doctrines should have followed considering their foundations. He did not neglect those circumstances which might have influenced the birth and development of systems; the latter aspect, however, is not thoroughly and appropriately developed because of the excessive space he devotes to political history, which is not justified by substantial results with regard to the interpretation of doctrines. The fundamental defect of the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* has already been pointed out by several reviews: Tiedemann failed to provide an exact definition of philosophy in order to guarantee the impartiality of his judgement, but for this reason he had to make use of criteria which are extrinsic and no less partial, such as the greater or lesser logical coherence of the doctrines, their originality, or their success in fostering new discoveries.

In the 'Einleitung' to his *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Tennemann further explains this interpretation. He distinguishes between the "matter" and "form" of

the historiography of philosophy, whose object refers in any case to the activity of reason with reference to the idea of philosophy. In Tennemann's view, Tiedemann grasped the matter of this object, but not the form (Tennemann, I, 'Einleitung', pp. XXX–XXXI). He immediately clarifies the meaning of this expression. After Brucker, two factors determined a new epoch in historiography: on the one hand, the renewal of historical and philological culture, which exerted a "most beneficial influence on the collection of materials relevant to the history of philosophy"; and on the other, the advent of the critical spirit of philosophy (*der kritische Geist der Philosophie*), an expression that can be better understood if rendered as "spirit of critical philosophy". Indeed, this 'spirit' seems to have provided the historiography of philosophy with its theoretical bases, thus allowing a detailed analysis of the concept of philosophy, a description of the cognitive faculties, the forms and laws of the intellect and reason, the distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy, and so on. In conclusion, this new philosophical 'spirit' has made it possible to constitute a historiography of philosophy with respect to 'form' as well (Tennemann, I, pp. LXXVI–LXXVII).

Hence, in Tennemann's view, in the process of the formation of a modern historiography of philosophy, Tiedemann stopped halfway: he only influenced the first factor, the historical aspect of the discipline, but he remained alien to the second which was represented by the Kantian revolution: "In short, this history recounts the events of philosophizing reason according to their reciprocal connection and in relation to political history and the history of mankind; moreover, it evaluates their influence and their logically conditioned truth. It is pragmatic and critical, but only partially so, because it does not present or judge philosophemes in relation to all the foundations and laws of the human mind. Hence it does not completely satisfy the plan to illustrate the spirit of speculative philosophy. Despite these defects (or more exactly, deficiencies), which are such only in so far as the author did not include certain perfections in his project, this work occupies the first place among the great general works published so far on the history of philosophy and, once completed, will remain a glorious monument to German diligence and spirit of research" (Tennemann, 'Uebersicht', PhJ, 1797, p. 74).

Later verdicts were formulated on the basis of Tennemann's interpretation. One of the most positive opinions was expressed by F.A. Carus. After asserting the primacy of pure philosophy – which alone leads to a comprehension of the entire course of development – over empirical history, as one of the prerequisites of the new German historiography, Carus sees the worth of Tiedemann's history not only as a "collection of materials", but also in providing an interpretation of them. "The pragmatic spirit of his work", observes Carus finally, "reveals a sharpness of judgement, even though the process of reasoning makes the work of synthesis difficult. The spirit of judgement is still too dogmatic. As for its formal value, he follows a well-reasoned framework and the external limits of the history are outlined much more exactly than in Meiners. But it contains too much cultural history, and too little overall view" (Carus, p. 87).

The faults just mentioned by Carus were magnified by Hegel, however, who deemed the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* "a pathetic example (*ein trauriges*

*Beispiel*) of a man who as a learned professor sacrificed his entire life to the study of speculative philosophy without the faintest idea of what the speculative spirit is, or what the concept is". Hegel's criticism, slightly mitigated by the acknowledgement that Tiedemann had provided valuable extracts from rare medieval books, is not completely unexpected; it is the result of the new philosophical perspective prevailing at the time and it simply reiterated the judgement of the Kantians a little more harshly: Tiedemann quotes long passages from the philosophers and repeats their reasoning, but he does not understand the speculative meaning: "when we come to speculation, he bristles and declares that it is all just mystical subtlety" (Hegel<sup>1</sup>, I, p. 134; Hegel<sup>2</sup>, pp. 91–92).

The French historians were more benevolent. For Degérando, Tiedemann was a true model: "it looks as if Tiedemann perceived what was lacking in Brucker and intended to make up for it. He was the first of the German historians to conceive the true aim of this kind of research properly and profoundly, the essential conditions it should satisfy". The elements characterizing the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* are clearly identified: it is not a compilation or a chronicle of opinions, but a search for their meaning, the systematic connection of doctrines, an interest in the progress of science, the link between political history and the history of philosophy. Because of these aspects, Tiedemann's work should be revived: "In our view, this composition, conceived, as we can see, according to truly elevated perspectives, deserves to become better known and more justly appreciated than it has been so far" (Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, pp.151 and 153). Even the critical remarks formulated by Degérando are detailed and indicate he had read the work carefully: Tiedemann outlined the individual philosophies with little accuracy, he did not point out the mistakes made by the human mind, he only let us suppose the link between the history of civilization and the history of philosophy, he developed the relations of consanguinity between the schools insufficiently, and he only cast a rapid glance at the philosophy of the eighteenth century.

In the twelfth lesson of his *Cours de philosophie. Introduction à l'histoire de la philosophie*, Victor Cousin described the speculative premises of Tiedemann's work. Together with Brucker and Tennemann, Tiedemann was one of the greatest historians of philosophy produced by the eighteenth century, one of the last true historians of philosophy, since specialization and monographs subsequently became predominant. Within the context of the historiography of philosophy, Brucker represents Cartesian rationalism, which in Germany found its maturest expression in Wolff; two opposite currents departed from rationalism: empiricism and idealism. Tiedemann was inspired by the former, and Tennemann by the latter. Cousin observes that the "philosophy of sensation" found its ideal environment in England (Hume) and France (Condillac), since it abhorred the German spirit; in Germany, therefore, it had no significant representatives, but only "ordinary minds", such as Tiedemann, who placed erudition and science at the service of this philosophy: "His work may be considered as that which best represents the perspective of the philosophy of sensation applied to the history of philosophy; but this perspective became much milder as it passed through German erudition, and Tiedemann resembles Locke rather than Condillac. This is the character of Tiedemann's great

work. Hence all its merits and its defects” (Cousin, p. 323). Cousin then establishes a comparison between the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* and Brucker’s *Historia critica*, which would certainly have pleased Tiedemann. According to Cousin, Tiedemann distinguished theology from philosophy more clearly, paid greater attention to philological problems, followed the chronological order more rigorously, and connected the history of philosophy with the other parts of history, and the clarity of his style was not only apparent (like Brucker’s, which was shaped by the geometrical method) but real and consistent, with the analytical spirit proper to his philosophy. The defects of Tiedemann’s work are in fact exaggerations of his best qualities: he refused to look for traces of philosophical speculation in Oriental mythologies, tended to consider too many ancient texts as apocryphal, and took as a criterion of judgement the exclusive, limited spirit of Locke’s philosophy.

Making a final assessment of the merit of the work, Cousin emphasizes one of the most typical features of Tiedemann’s historiography, which had been mostly overlooked up to then. The *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* is dominated by a fundamental idea which constitutes its core as well as its primary dimension: the idea of progress, which is linked to the assumption of the perfectibility of human reason *ad infinitum*. Cousin judges this perspective to be new and interesting, although he points out its limits, namely, the absence of an exact definition of the laws of progress in philosophy: “Brucker does not know whether the history of philosophy progressed or regressed from Eastern philosophy to the present time, whether the past has undergone its process of perfecting, whether the future will be able to perfect the past or will do nothing but stop at the point where the excellent Brucker stopped with Wolff, his master. Tiedemann on the other hand believes in the perfectibility of human reason and concludes his work by inviting the reader to have hope and faith in the future. This is a true merit; but it should be added that Tiedemann never attempted to define the laws of the general progress he speaks of, and he is obscure and unclear as concerns the whole, indeed, the whole does not exist in his work, which lacks order and a true plan”.<sup>41</sup>

After Cousin, references to Tiedemann’s work became less frequent and more general. In most cases, it was understood in light of its Enlightenment characterization and, due to its adherence to the idea of progress, was associated with French historiography. At the beginning of his essay *L’histoire de la philosophie. Ce qu’elle a été, ce qu’elle peut être* (p. 4), Picavet stresses Tiedemann’s effort to deliver historiographical judgement from the concept of absolute truth and subordinate it to the criterion of the relative perfection of systems: “Tiedemann, who professes a philosophy that embraces elements from Locke, Leibniz, and Wolff, strived to present systems impartially and determine their relative perfection”. Banfi, on the

<sup>41</sup>Cousin, p. 325; his words are echoed by Christian-Jean-Guillaume Bartholmess in the entry ‘Tiedemann’ in the *Dictionnaire des sciences philosophiques*: “La principale nouveauté de son oeuvre, c’est qu’elle est dominée par l’idée du progrès: chez lui la speculation, la recherche savante des raisons premières et dernières de toutes choses, constitue un ensemble suivi et lié, une unité naturelle, successive, progressive [...]” (Franck, VI, p. 900).

other hand, relates this idea to the concept of history of the French Enlightenment, or more particularly the *Encyclopédie*: “The same concept of a history of philosophy as a history of the achievements of human reason – which is typical of the Enlightenment – pervades Tiedemann’s work, in which the critical analysis of the systems starts from an appraisal of the logicity of their internal nature and the new degrees of truth attained” (Banfi, p. 115).

Freyer’s *Geschichte der Geschichte der Philosophie* gives less prominence to Tiedemann than to Brucker and Tennemann, who are the object of specific analysis. The *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* is mentioned – beside the works by Eberhard, Meiners, Hissmann, and Garve – in the chapter on “later-Enlightenment” historiography, which is itself interpreted as part of the more general historiographical activity (particularly of the Göttingen school). For Freyer, German historical culture in the second-half of the eighteenth century reveals no particular originality compared with that of France and England, from which the historiography of philosophy also took its two fundamental concepts: “the idea of culture as a fusion of all the vital activities of an epoch and the idea of progress in history” (Freyer, p. 55). But the development of the idea of progress in its most elevated form, “as a regular progression from pre-scientific and imaginary views of the world to the universal conceptual system of the experimental sciences” (Freyer, p. 61), was to take place in France thanks to Turgot, and not in Germany, where historians seem to have remained at the level of a naive and mechanical concept of progress. In Freyer’s view, the influence of *Popularphilosophie*, the underlying philosophical movement, on the historiography of philosophy of the time was even less significant and decisive. Clearly Freyer fails to appreciate this current of thought, which is accused of having watered down philosophy: “By interfering with all the questions of civil life and by judging that its task is to be everywhere, and everywhere be effectual, it wastes its strength, and what it gains in usefulness it loses in self-awareness and understanding of its own nature” (Freyer, p. 67). A new phase in the historiography of philosophy will only become possible, concludes Freyer, on the basis of a better conceptual definition of philosophy, that is to say, on the basis of critical philosophy.

Greater interest in the philosophical premises of the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* emerges from the pages that M. Wundt devotes to Tiedemann, even though he considers the work as a whole to be more significant from a historical rather than a philosophical viewpoint: “The book belongs to the ‘pragmatic’ history of that period, its meaning resides in this. The author directs his attention to the internal connection linking the progress of thought; he therefore only intends to deal with that which has really affected this progress and, as far as possible, according to a temporal sequence” (Wundt, pp. 300–301). This historical tendency, however, also has a theoretical cause, since it is related to the central position occupied in the philosophy of the time (in particular, as we have seen, in *Popularphilosophie*) by anthropology with respect to ontology. It is not by chance, observes Wundt, that the age of Ch. Wolff did not produce any important work on the history of philosophy (as is known, Brucker was a pupil of Buddeus, and Wundt places him in the first phase of the *Aufklärung*), whereas historiographical activity intensified



enormously during the third phase of the Enlightenment, on the part of both the popular philosophers and the Kantians. For Wundt, on a historiographical plane the philosophical tendency typical of the period manifests itself in a methodology which aims at understanding philosophies as totalities reflecting the spirit of the age and pays attention to the development of philosophical problems within the context of the progress of thought; Tiedemann is “the chief representative of this new historiography” (Wundt, p. 315).

Victor Cousin’s interpretation was taken up again in the twentieth century by Martial Gueroult, and was further developed by Lucien Braun. Although he stresses a certain indeterminacy in Tiedemann’s concept of the progress of science, an indeterminacy that is also reflected in his way of understanding philosophical science, Gueroult states decisively that “he was the first to try to make the history of philosophy arise from philosophy, to reconcile the spirit of history with the spirit of philosophy, and effectively to introduce into it a reform of the other genres of history” (Gueroult, II, p. 364). By developing this line of interpretation, Braun places Tiedemann’s work at the pinnacle of the historiography of philosophy produced by the European Enlightenment. The influence of English empiricism leads him to privilege the historical rather than the speculative point of view and to polemicize over this point with the Kantians. “With Tiedemann and the popular philosophers, however, a pluralistic explanation of the becoming of philosophy emerges, which manifests both their scepticism with regard to an exhaustive explanation and a new sensitivity to the propositions of experience. It is precisely this sensitivity that leads them, in the study of the legality proper to the development of philosophy, to privilege description at the expense of explanation” (Braun, p. 192). Yet, an *a priori* assumption is present in Tiedemann too, namely, the category of progress, which requires as a postulate the necessary perfecting of man’s nature. “This tacit implication”, Braun asserts, “is never analysed. It constitutes one of the preconceptions of the *Aufklärung*; what denotes progress is an increase in lights. But this increase is conceived of according to a simplistic model, a reason that always works in the same way, does not change the problems or transform the way of presenting them” (Braun, p. 196). But this naive and simplistic concept leads to a re-thinking of the history of philosophy, as a process of successive achievements, in which nothing gets lost but each element contributes to the progress of the whole and which it is therefore impossible to neglect. The path is thus prepared for the new concepts of critical philosophy and romanticism: “The accusation that the technique thus initiated by Tiedemann breaks and mutilates philosophies, as insignificant wholes, is certainly not unfounded. But it only becomes possible on the basis of further evidence. Referring to the definition of the history of philosophy provided by critical philosophy, we can state that Tiedemann was not interested in the hierarchy of problems, that it was precisely this hierarchy that constituted the originality of each historical philosophy, or – resting on the romantic view of the history of philosophy – that Tiedemann (because his sole concern was for increasing novelties) systematically suppressed the negative aspect of becoming and of philosophies” (Braun, p. 200).

Tiedemann's work, however, should not only be understood as an 'introduction' to Kantian and romantic historiography. This would also imply a chronological succession of the problems that gradually emerged, which is not easily verifiable, at least as concerns the two currents fostered by the philosophy of the later Enlightenment (*Popularphilosophie*) and by critical philosophy, which for some time developed in parallel. Indeed, the historiographical attitude shown by the Kantians (Buhle and Tennemann) and by the anti-Kantians (Meiners, Eberhard, and Tiedemann) appears less heterogeneous than might at first appear, and, when describing the various trends in German historiography of philosophy, a historian like Zeller (but see also Wundt's judgement mentioned above) chose to place Tiedemann, Tennemann, and their followers in a single school and distinguish it from the later schools of the Schellingians (Ast and Schleiermacher) and the Hegelians (Hegel, Wendt, and Braniss). In his view, this single school is characterized by the introduction of the "critical spirit" into historiography – which represents its merit – but it used extrinsic connections in order to explain systems, whereas the romantic and idealistic schools used the principle of an 'organic' and 'dialectic' explanation (see Zeller, pp. 1–85; Geldsetzer, pp. 93–95).

With respect to Kantianism, Tiedemann claims to have put forward the need for basing the discipline in a historical rather than a speculative sense. The priority given to the historical and philological work responds to the need to avoid the adoption of atemporal and abstract criteria which are presented as dogmatic rules applicable to history but elaborated outside history. The deficiencies or uncertainties of the overall view, which were immediately pointed out and considered to be the defects of the *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*, depend on this caution, because what derives from and is justified by theoretical premises is above all the general framework of interpretation, whereas the analysis of the various facts and doctrines can be more immediately related to historical causes and motivations. Hence Tiedemann does not propose a "history of philosophy without philosophy"; he claims to be a philosopher and demands that the historiography of philosophy should be written with the competence of a philosopher, but not with an explicit declaration of the system to which the historian adheres. Indeed, the historian is called on to perform a difficult task and to remain precariously balanced; in this regard, Tiedemann himself was criticized from different and opposite viewpoints for not having defined the doctrines according to the idea of philosophy and for letting himself be conditioned by his own philosophical convictions. Tiedemann responded to these remarks by emphasizing the validity of his work as a historian, a work which can be described as historiography written by a philosopher who strives to remain firmly grounded in history rather than a "philosophy of the history of philosophy", which could also be written by a historian, but one who allows himself to be oriented in a speculative theoretical direction.

**9.5.6** On Tiedemann's life and work: ADB, XXXVIII, pp. 276–77; DECGPh, pp. 1181–1186; K. W. Justi, 'D. Tiedemann', NTM, 1803, pp. 353–67; L. Wachler, 'Vorrede', in D. Tiedemann, *Handbuch der Psychologie*, ed. L. Wachler (Leipzig, 1804); Meusel, VIII, pp. 64–66; X, p. 745; XI, pp. 721–22; BUAM, LXII, pp. 311–13; Franck, VI, pp. 898–900; Gumposch, pp. 212–13; E. Zeller, *Geschichte*

*der deutschen Philosophie seit Leibniz* (Munich, 1873), pp. 318–319; Wundt, pp. 299–301; Adickes, pp. 46–47; P. Spinicci, ‘Tiedemann redivivus. Anton Marty e la linguistica settecentesca nell’età del positivismo’, *Riv. di storia della filosofia*, XLIII (1988), pp. 307–327; *Kant’s Early Critics*, pp. 11–4, 33–4, 81–91, and 199–209.

Reviews of his works on the history of philosophy in eighteenth-century journals: ADBibl., ‘Anhang von 25. bis 36. Bd.’, V, pp. 3046–3051; ADBibl., ‘Anhang von 37. bis 52. Bd.’, II, pp. 1222–1228; GGZ, 1777, pp. 82–86; TM, 1777, pp. 95–251; AB, LI (1777), pp. 359–383; GGZ, 1781, pp. 153–56; NPhL, 1780, pp. 189–214; GA, no. 23 (1791), pp. 225–28; OALZ, no. 100 (1791), cols 369–375; ALZ, nos 325–327 (1792), cols 529–547; GA, no. 3 (1792), pp. 18–23; OALZ, no. 142 (1792), cols 1033–1036; AM, 1792, pp. 208–211; GA, no. 90 (1793), pp. 1097–1102; PhJM, 1793, pp. 154–156; GGZ, 1794, pp. 749–750; NADB, XIII, 2 (1794), pp. 415–421; ADBibl., no. 117/1 (1794), pp. 112–22; ALZ, nos 300–301 (1794), cols 681–696; APh, 1795, cols 1179–92; Abicht, 1795, pp. 279–80; ALZ, nos 204–205 (1796), cols 9–19; 337 (1796), cols 223–36; APh, 1796, cols 651–67; GGZ, 1797, pp. 895–96; OALZ, no. 139 (1797), cols 977–89; APh, 1797, cols 369–408; ALZ, no. 67 (1799), cols 532–535.

On contemporary judgements: Carus, pp. 82–83 and 86–87; Tennemann, ‘Uebersicht des Vorzüglichstens’, PhJ, 1795, pp. 334–335 and 339–340; 1797, pp. 70–74; Tennemann, I, pp. XXX–XXXII and LXXVII–LXXVIII; Cousin, pp. 323–325; Buhle, I, p. 9; Degérando, I, pp. 150–155, 187, and 191; Hegel<sup>1</sup>, I, p. 134; Hegel<sup>2</sup>, pp. 91–92; Ernesti, pp. 84–87.

Critical literature: Picavet, p. 4; Freyer, pp. 59–69; Banfi, I, p. 115; Geldsetzer, pp. 31–32; Braun, pp. 184–203; Gueroult, II, pp. 349–71; Schneider, pp. 75–84; Th. A. Szlezák, ‘Schleiermachers Einleitung zur Platon-Übersetzung von 1804. Ein Vergleich mit Tiedemann und Tennemann’, *Antike und Abendland*, XLIII (1997), pp. 46–62; Varani, pp. 405–437 (on Neoplatonism); M. Longo, ‘Tradizioni storiografiche a confronto: il passaggio dalla storiografia filosofica dell’illuminismo al kantismo’, *Kant E-Prints*, III/2 (2008), pp. 173–191; P.K.J. Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy. Racism in the Formation of the Philosophical Canon, 1780–1830* (Albany, N.Y., 2013), pp. 6, 8, 14, and 82–86; Ciliberto, pp. 266 and 1033.

**Part V**  
**The Historiography of Philosophy in**  
**Germany in the Age of Kant**

# Chapter 10

## Philosophy and Historiography: The Kantian Turning-Point

Giuseppe Micheli

### 10.1 Premise<sup>1</sup>

In his works, Kant never explicitly intended to write a history of philosophy. The few pages he devoted to this subject at the end of the first *Critique*, which he entitled ‘The History of Pure Reason’, do not claim to be an exhaustive discussion; far more modestly, as Kant himself pointed out: “I will content myself with casting a cursory glance from a merely transcendental point of view, namely that of the nature of pure reason, on the whole of its labours hitherto”. This “cursory glance”, for Kant, was supposed to simply point at “a place that is left open in the system and must be filled in the future” (*KrV*, A 852 B 880). The work *What Real Progress Has Metaphysics Made in Germany Since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?*, left unfinished

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<sup>1</sup>The quotations from Kant’s works are taken directly from the Academy edition (*Gesammelte Schriften*, Berlin 1902-); besides the page and volume number, the line reference is also given where necessary. The *Vorlesungen* are quoted from the following editions as well: *Logik-Vorlesung unveröffentlichte Nachschriften*, ed. T. Pinder (Hamburg, 1998); *Vorlesung zur Moralphilosophie*, ed. W. Stark (Berlin, 2004), *Eine Vorlesung Kants über Ethik*, ed. P. Menzer (Berlin, 1924). For the *Critique of Pure Reason* (= *KrV*) we follow the standard format for that work, by indicating A and B for the first and second editions, respectively, and the page numbers in those editions. Other abbreviations used: *KpV* (*Critique of Practical Reason*); *Prol.* (*Prolegomena*); *KU* (*Critique of the Power of Judgment*). The English translation has been taken for the most part, with occasional modifications, from the Cambridge Edition of Kant’s Works edited by P. Guyer and A.W. Wood; the translations by N.K. Smith, *Critique of Pure Reason* [1929] (London, 1992), and L.W. Beck, *Kant’s Latin writings* (New York, 1992<sup>2</sup>), have also been used.

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and published posthumously by F.Th. Rink in 1804, is not a historical work, either, but rather a presentation, *also* including historical references and arguments, of the speculative positions of criticism in its final phase.<sup>2</sup> Yet, despite the roughly sketched historical outline that ends the first *Critique*, it is worth emphasizing that, in concluding his greatest work, Kant declared the system of transcendental philosophy to be incomplete for the lack of an explicit, systematic, non-empirical treatment of the work carried out by reason in the course of history. And he took care to indicate, with a title at least, that void that demanded to be filled for the sake of completeness (which for Kant was the measure of the speculative consistency of a philosophical work<sup>3</sup>), at least in the future.

More generally, one can further observe that Kant's critique is certainly not "a critique of books and systems, but a critique of the faculty of reason in general" (*KrV*, A XII). On more than one occasion, Kant himself warned his readers that they should never forget that critical enquiry takes place precisely on the transcendental plane and that there should never be any equivocation concerning the nature of that "whole new science, never before attempted"<sup>4</sup> which is the critique of pure reason. However, it is equally undeniable that the idea of the need for such a critique of reason, and the conviction that by then the only thing philosophy could do was to follow "the critical path",<sup>5</sup> arose in Kant from his acknowledgement of the clear failure of metaphysics, at least from a historical point of view, and from his awareness of a radical crisis in the world of philosophical culture: the products of reason in its history appeared to Kant as "edifices, to be sure, but only in ruins" (*KrV*, A 852 B 880), and the historical development of metaphysics seemed to be nothing but "the battlefield of endless controversies".<sup>6</sup>

Yet this is not all: in the pages of 'Transcendental Dialectic', where the critique of reason takes on the specific sense of a critique of dialectical illusion, the multiplicity (almost a mutual contradictoriness) of past doctrinal systems, that is to say, the

<sup>2</sup>For this text, see H.J. de Vleeschauwer, 'La Cinderella dans l'œuvre kantienne', in *Akten des 4. Internationalen Kant-Kongresses, Kant-Studien-Sonderheft* (Berlin, 1974), Part 1, pp. 297–310; Id., 'La composition du Preisschrift d'Immanuel Kant sur les progrès de la métaphysique', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, XVII (1979), pp. 143–196; P. Manganaro, 'Introduzione' to Kant, *I progressi della metafisica* (Naples, 1977), pp. 11–59.

<sup>3</sup>See *KrV*, A XIII, *KrV*, B XXIII–XXIV; *KrV*, B XXXVII–XXXVIII; Kant himself indicates the criterion of completeness as the key to the interpretation of his own system in a letter to Ch. Garve of 7th August, 1783, X, p. 341.

<sup>4</sup>Letter to Ch. Garve (7th August, 1783), X, p. 340: "Be so kind [...] to notice that it is not at all metaphysics that the *Critique* is doing but a whole new science, never before attempted, namely, the critique of an *a priori* judging reason"; Letter to M. Herz (May, 1781), X, p. 269: "This sort of investigation will always remain difficult, for it includes the *metaphysics of metaphysics*".

<sup>5</sup>*KrV*, A 856 B 884: "The critical path alone is still open"; *KrV*, A XII: "I have entered upon this path – the only one that has remained unexplored".

<sup>6</sup>*KrV*, A VIII: "The battlefield of these endless controversies is called metaphysics"; *KrV*, B XIV–XV: "In metaphysics we have to retrace our path countless times, because we find that it does not lead where we want to go, and it is so far from reaching unanimity in the assertions of its adherents that it is rather a battlefield [...]".

history of “special metaphysics”, becomes the privileged place for the concrete unfolding of the critical capacity of reason. In the contrasts produced by the mathematical-transcendental idea of the world and the dynamic-transcendental idea of the world, the ‘Antinomy of Pure Reason’, for example, summarizes, according to a rational order based on models, recurrent philosophical positions in the ancient and modern history of metaphysics, puts forward a ‘scientific’ interpretation of them, and provides a historical foundation for the distinctions that became common in later historiography of philosophy, such as that between dogmatism and empiricism (cf. esp. *KrV*, A 462–476 B 490–504).

In the *Critique of Practical Reason* similar attempts at a scientific reading of the historical variety of moral doctrines can be found: for example, in the first chapter of the ‘Analytic’, in the scheme that illustrates the “material determining grounds” of the will, or in the ‘Dialectic’, in the programmatically instituted opposition between Epicurean and Stoic ethics (and, more generally, in the classification by types of the ancient moral systems that can be found, for instance, in the *Lectures* on ethics).<sup>7</sup> Even more explicitly, in the third *Critique*, in the ‘Critique of the Teleological Judgment’, the presentation of the antinomy coincides with the schematic outline of the “various systems concerning the finality of nature”, which Kant identifies on a historical plane with four metaphysical theories. Two of these are ‘idealistic’ (“the *idealism* of purposiveness”), namely they consider finality a mere illusion: Democritus and Epicurus’ doctrine attributes natural effects to chance, whereas Spinoza’s system attributes them to a necessity inherent in the absolute. The other two theories are ‘realistic’ (“the *realism* of purposiveness”), as they state that finality also exists in reality, either as a force immanent in nature (hylozoism) or as the result of the idea of a creative intelligence (theism) (*KU*, §§ 72–73, V, pp. 389–392). In all these cases, transcendental enquiry and historiographical investigation are developed in parallel, and the critique of reason enables Kant to identify a logical order in the chaos of the different systems and to draw from the latter a sort of typological history of philosophical doctrines.

There seems to be, therefore, a closer relationship between transcendental philosophy and the historiography of philosophy than one might at first think. This relationship has significant consequences both concerning the interpretation of the various stages in the history of thought and concerning the method of research into

<sup>7</sup>*KpV*, V, p. 40; *KpV*, V, pp. 111–113; *KpV*, V, pp. 126–128; concerning the *Lectures*, see the historical (quite similar) expositions included in *Moral Mrongovius* [1774–1775], XXVII, pp. 1400–1404; *Eine Vorlesung Kants über Ethik* [1775–1780] (ed. by P. Menzer), pp. 7–13; *Vorlesungen zur Moralphilosophie* [Nachschrift Kaehler, 1777] (ed. by W. Stark), pp. 9–20; *Praktische Philosophie* Powalski [early 1780?], XXVII, pp. 100–106; *Moralphilosophie* Collins [1784–1785], XXVII, pp. 247–252; *Moral Mrongovius II* [1784–1785], XXIX, pp. 599–605; *Metaphysik der Sitten* Vigilantius [1793–1794], XXVII, pp. 483–484; cf. M. Albrecht, *Kants Antinomie der praktischen Vernunft* (Hildesheim and New York, 1978), pp. 89–95 and 133–136; B. Milz, *Das gesuchte Widerstreit. Die Antinomie in Kants Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (Berlin, 2002), pp. 19–32, 110–114, 144–148, and 352–356; M. Baum, ‘Die Antinomie der praktischen Vernunft in Kants kritischer Philosophie’, *Wiener Jahrbuch für Philosophie*, XLIV (2012), pp. 83–98.

the history of philosophy and, more generally, the very ‘philosophy’ of the history of philosophy, which is what is of most importance in the present context. If, on the one hand, Kant’s reconstructions of the history of philosophy may seem, and indeed are, an attempt to justify his own theory, carried out by means of an interpretation of philosophy’s past that rationalises it to serve the new perspective he has opened up, then on the other hand, this also results in the imposition of the historical dimension on Kant’s theory for reasons that are intrinsic to it. For Kant, philosophy immediately faces the *aporia* of its history: the substantial identity of the problems that have always troubled reason “since they are given to it [...] by the nature of reason itself” (*KrV*, A VII; see also *KrV*, B XV), and the demonstrative claims common to all attempts at solving these problems are countered by the contradictory multiplicity of the answers that have been suggested in the course of history. For Kant, thought can no longer avoid dealing with an *aporia* which, if ignored, might eventually lead to “the death of healthy philosophy”, and he proceeds down the critical path also in order to attempt to provide a solution to this “phenomenon of human reason”: the contradictory multiplicity of illusory appearances produced by reason itself, fully revealed in the “wholly natural antithetic” it gives rise to, shows that there is a link, which is grounded in the very nature of reason itself, between the uniqueness and immutability of truth and the multiplicity and historical variety of philosophies (*KrV*, A 407 B 433–434).

Kant’s interest in the history of philosophy is philosophical, not merely historical. He is aware of the historical dimension of philosophy: on the one hand, he consciously goes back to the problems, but also the methods, the arguments, and the very systematic programme, of tradition, because to his mind the problems of philosophy have always been the same, namely, those presented to man by the nature of reason. On the other hand, his philosophy aims to produce a radical break with past history, elevating philosophy once and for all, “so far as it has been granted to humans”, from the level of opinion to that of science.<sup>8</sup>

Kant is convinced, and feels he must convince his readers, that before tackling any metaphysical problem whatsoever it is necessary to question whether metaphysics as a science is possible: the very history of metaphysics requires it. Evidence shows that Kant’s theory was not alien to historiography even in the so-called pre-critical period. Fundamental concepts of criticism, such as the sceptical method

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<sup>8</sup>*KrV*, A 838 B 866: “[...] philosophy is a mere idea of a possible science, which is nowhere given *in concreto*, but which one seeks to approach in various ways until the only footpath, much overgrown by sensibility, is discovered, and the hitherto unsuccessful ectype, so far as it has been granted to humans, is made equal to the archetype”; *KrV*, A XIX–XX: “Now metaphysics, according to the concepts we will give of it here, is the only one of all the sciences that may promise that little but unified effort, and that indeed in a short time, will complete it in a such a way that nothing remains to posterity except to adapt it in a *didactic* manner [...]”; *KrV*, B XXIII–XXIV: “[...] metaphysics has the rare good fortune [...], which is that if by this critique it has been brought onto the secure course of a science, then it can fully embrace the entire field of cognitions belonging to it and thus can complete its work and lay it down for posterity [...]”; see also *KrV*, B XXXIV and B XXXVIII.



and the dialectic are the result of a meditation that also included reflection on the history of philosophy and the encounter, in current research, with past doctrines. In addition, these very concepts, by which the critical Kant indicates the method that “is essentially suited only to transcendental philosophy”,<sup>9</sup> also express the awareness of the link that, according to Kant, connects philosophy and its history: the method of transcendental philosophy, that is to say, the sceptical method, requires that the former come to terms with the diversity of opinions and especially with contradiction, the highest form that such diversity can take. This battlefield of endless controversies that is the history of metaphysics therefore becomes the very theme with respect to which the critical capacity of reason is to be assessed.

Theoretical reason and interpretative reason, speculative activity and historiographical reflection, in other words the critique of reason and the critique of systems, while formally distinct, proceed in parallel: it should therefore come as no surprise that Kant treats the history of philosophy as an inventory of concepts to be freely used within demonstrative argumentation, and at the same time proceeds in his historiographical argumentation clearly and intentionally in a demonstrative fashion. Starting from Kant (and the Kantians), critical reflection on the history of philosophy becomes an integral part of the philosophical debate.

## 10.2 The Documents of Kant’s Historiographical Work

A comparative analysis of the documents pertaining to Kant’s historiographical work, from the *Druckschriften* (printed works) to the *Nachlaß* (literary remains), the *Briefwechsel* (correspondence), and the *Vorlesungen* (lectures), confirms the theories presented above. In particular, since Kant did not present an explicit, systematic discussion of the history of philosophy in any of his published works, his *Lectures* and the historical introductions with which they started, according to an academic practice that was initiated in Germany by Christian Thomasius (see *Models*, II, pp. 301–315), constitute a precious, irreplaceable source. For over a century, two very similar presentations of the history of philosophy deriving from courses held by Kant in the last years of university teaching, the ‘Short sketch of a history of philosophy’ and the ‘History of philosophy’ contained respectively in the *Logik* published by Jäsche in 1800 and in the *Metaphysik* published by Pölitz in

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<sup>9</sup>KrV, A 423–424 B 451–452: “This method of watching or even occasioning a contest between assertions, not in order to decide it to the advantage of one party or the other, but to investigate whether the object of the dispute is not perhaps a mere mirage at which each would snatch in vain without being able to gain anything even if he met with no resistance – this procedure, I say, can be called the *sceptical method*. It is entirely different from *scepticism* [ . . . ]. For the sceptical method aims at certainty, seeking to discover the point of misunderstanding in disputes that are honestly intended and conducted with intelligence by both sides [ . . . ]. This sceptical method, however, is essentially suited only to transcendental philosophy, and can in any case be dispensed with in every other field of investigation, but not in this one”.

1821, were the only known texts showing Kant's work as a historian of philosophy. Only in recent times, with the current, still ongoing publication of all Kant's *Vorlesungen* edited by the Academy of Science in Göttingen, has a systematic study of the historiographical material contained therein become possible.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the loss of several notebooks, today we have numerous versions of the history of philosophy, metaphysics, logic, and ethics from the *Nachlaß* and the *Vorlesungen* that cover without any great gaps the whole period of Kant's teaching activity from his first course on logic in the winter semester of 1755–1756 to 1796, the year in which he definitively stopped teaching. The Kantian *Nachlaß* (*Reflexionen*, *Lose Blätter*, projects and drafts for written works), the letters, the *Vorlesungen* (which are either *Nachschriften*, notebooks reproducing the Kantian *Diktat* written by students during his lectures, or *Abschriften*, notebooks transcribed by other interested people on the basis of one or more original manuscripts), in other words all of Kant's unpublished works are also of particular importance for the period when criticism was in gestation, that is to say, the 5 years before the “great light” of 1769, and above all for the decade 1770–1781, when Kant published virtually nothing, but which was the most tormented period in his speculative formation. These unpublished papers are the only documents attesting to the great intellectual fervour that was to lead from the 1770 *Dissertation* to the first *Critique*. As we shall see in greater detail, this material reveals that Kant's meditation was also in continual development concerning the theme of the history of philosophy, constantly drawing inspiration from the latter for its theoretical progress, and it also unveils a wealth of content of which there was no hint in the lectures published by Jäsche and Pöhlitz.

### 10.3 Kant's Historiographical Work During His First Ten Years of Teaching

One can only conjecture on the role of the history of philosophy in Kant's education. The works written between 1747 and 1760 testify to the fact that as a young man Kant was mainly, if not exclusively, interested in mathematics and natural science. Both at the *Fridericianum* and the University of Königsberg, the main source of his knowledge of ancient thought must certainly have been the reading of the Latin classics, which he always cultivated with great love; his knowledge of modern thought must have been more direct, with much greater focus on the

<sup>10</sup>On Kant's *Vorlesungen* and their importance also for the spread of critical philosophy, see G. Lehmann, ‘Allgemeine Einleitung zu Kants Vorlesungen’, in I. Kant, *Vorlesung über philosophische Enzyklopädie* (Berlin, 1961), pp. 7–27 (repr. in G. Lehmann, *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Interpretation der Philosophie Kants*, Berlin, 1969, pp. 67–85); on the many problems related to the edition of the *Vorlesungen* on Logic and Metaphysics (which include the hope that a new edition of them will be produced) see, among others, the contributions by N. Hinske, M. Oberhausen, T. Pinder, and S. Naragon in *Kant-Studien*, XCI (2000), pp. 85–93 and 160–215.

developments in the scientific disciplines.<sup>11</sup> Kant must first have encountered the history of philosophy during the course on logic held by Martin Knutzen, which he probably attended during his second semester at the University of Königsberg. In his course on logic, Knutzen also devoted some time to the history of philosophy and of logic, as one can infer from the logic textbook he published in 1747, which collected, as the author states in the preface, the contents of over 10 years' teaching this discipline; therefore, the text must have reported the *Diktat* of Knutzen's lectures quite faithfully. The textbook contains an exposition of the history of philosophy and logic, which, albeit brief and schematic, reveals a certain interest on the part of Kant's teacher for this discipline.<sup>12</sup>

It is, in any case, reasonable to assume that in his last years at the University of Königsberg, and then, first as preceptor and later as *Privatdozent* in Königsberg, Kant had access to, and used in various ways, part of the historiographical production of the time. This included works of the so-called literature of polyhistory, such as the famous, widely-circulating *Polyhistor* by Morhof; brief summaries of the history of philosophy, more or less like that of Knutzen, included in several university textbooks prepared by Thomasian and eclectic authors; Bayle's *Dictionnaire* which appeared in a German translation in the years 1741–1744; Brucker's German and Latin works, and those of his followers and epitomizers.<sup>13</sup> The interest of the young Kant in the history of philosophy, even if limited, is proven

<sup>11</sup>On Kant's studies at the *Fridericianum* and university, and on his teaching activity up to 1760, see the still fundamental study by E. Arnoldt, 'Kants Jugend und die fünf ersten Jahre seiner Privatdozentur', *Altpreußische Monatsschrift*, XVIII (1881), pp. 606–686; see also the recent works by M. Kuehn, *Kant. A Biography* (Cambridge and New York, 2001), particularly pp. 24–99 (which mentions [p. 47] the history of philosophy as an optional subject that was already available in the *cursus studiorum* at the *Fridericianum*), and Sgarbi, *La Kritik der reinen Vernunft nel contesto della tradizione logica aristotelica*, particularly pp. 57–99 (on the presence of Aristotelianism at the *Fridericianum* during the years Kant studied there); on the organization of studies at the *Fridericianum* see *Die Schule Immanuel Kants. Mit dem Text von Ch. Schiffert über das Königsberger Collegium Fridericianum*, ed. H.F. Klemme (Hamburg, 1994).

<sup>12</sup>M. Knutzen, *Elementa philosophiae rationalis seu Logicae cum generalis tum specialioris mathematica methodo in usum auditorum suorum demonstrata* (Königsberg and Leipzig: apud Io. H. Hartung, 1747): it contains a brief history of philosophy (pp. 28–32), a *conspectus* of the same (pp. 35–36) and a schematic history of logic (pp. 46–48); for a detailed examination of these few pages by Knutzen, cf. Micheli, *Kant storico della filosofia*, pp. 30–36. On the figure of Knutzen (1713–1751), whose role in Kant's intellectual biography should not be overestimated, see the monograph by B. Erdmann, *Martin Knutzen und seine Zeit. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Wolffischen Schule und insbesondere zur Entwicklungsgeschichte Kants* (Leipzig, 1876; repr. Hildesheim, 1973), who, however, does recognise in Kant's master "one of the few men of learning in the anti-historical eighteenth century who had a keen interest in history" (p. 129).

<sup>13</sup>For a complete picture of the works on the history of philosophy known and used by Kant, with the relevant text references, see Micheli, *Kant storico della filosofia*, pp. 36–56 and 316–318, and Sgarbi, *La Kritik der reinen Vernunft nel contesto della tradizione logica aristotelica*, pp. 57–99; on Morhof's *Polyhistor*, see *Models*, I, pp. 82–85; on the reception of Bayle's *Dictionnaire* and, more in general, on the historiography of philosophy in Germany in the first half of the eighteenth century, cf. *Models*, II, pp. 134–139 and 301–577.

in any case by the fact that from the very outset of his teaching activity, in the winter semester 1755–1756, he continued the custom of introducing his course on logic with a brief outline of the history not only of logic but also of philosophy in general. There are traces of the young lecturer's historiographical activity in the Kantian *Nachlaß* and in some of the *Vorlesungen* notebooks. This fact is noteworthy if we consider that this custom, which as we have said had already been used by Knutzen, was not then universally accepted: this is proved, among other things, by the lack of historical sections in even the most widely used textbooks of Wolffian inspiration, whether orthodox or not, such as those by Baumgarten and Meier, which Kant adopted for his courses.

### 10.3.1 The First Outline of the History of Philosophy

The first document revealing Kant's interest in the history of philosophy is his *Reflexion zur Logik 1635*.<sup>14</sup> The earliest part of this note was written on one of the many sheets that Kant inserted into his own copy of the textbook he used for his course on logic (Meier's *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre*). Adickes attributes this to the period between 1752, the year in which Meier's compendium was published, and the winter semester of 1755–1756, when Kant held his first university course on logic. In all likelihood, the *Reflexion* is the outline for a presentation of the general history of philosophy and the history of logic, drafted by Kant in order to integrate Meier's text, which, as we have said, lacked a historical section. The note presents numerous additions, some of them very brief, others more extensive, in some cases entire re-elaborations of the original plan, introduced during the following years, as Kant habitually did, in order to integrate and modify the original framework. This proves that the note remained, for some years at least, the basis for Kant's teaching of the history of philosophy in his course on logic.

The primitive nucleus of *Reflexion 1635* consists of a schematic summary of Friedrich Gentzken's *Historia philosophiae*,<sup>15</sup> a well-known and widely-used textbook, which Kant must already have read during the years of his education, since it was one of the works Knutzen recommended to his students (Knutzen, *Elementa*, p. 32). The schematic nature of the summary proves that Kant must already have mastered the historical material he was to present in his introductory lectures on the history of philosophy, to the point of being able to lecture on the basis of just a brief note, mainly containing the order of his presentation. The conciseness of the note can also be explained by the fact that the course on logic, for which this brief presentation was intended, was at the time the most typically propaedeutic course

<sup>14</sup>XVI, pp. 56–59. On this brief note, see E. Feldmann, 'Die Geschichte der Philosophie in Kants Vorlesungen', *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 49(1936), pp. 167–198, and Micheli, *Kant storico della filosofia*, pp. 63–69.

<sup>15</sup>F. Gentzken, *Historia philosophiae* (Hamburg: apud Viduam Felgineri, 1724, 1731<sup>2</sup>, 1735<sup>5</sup>); see *Models*, II, pp. 440–450.

taught at the Faculty of Philosophy (or ‘lower Faculty’), which in turn included a whole series of various propaedeutic courses – as opposed to those taught in the so-called ‘higher Faculties’ of theology, law and medicine. The course on logic was, then, a course for beginners, attended by nearly all students, whatever their chosen field of study, and mostly followed during their first semester.<sup>16</sup>

*Reflexion 1635* is entitled *Geschichte der Weltweisheit überhaupt* (*History of Wisdom in General*). If we ignore the changes made in later years, Kant’s note begins with the philosophy of the Eastern peoples listing, in this order, the Hebrews, Egyptians, Chaldeans, Persians, Indians, and Chinese, with brief mentions of their doctrines, mostly taken from Gentzken. This is followed by Greek philosophy, divided into two periods, that of the Seven Wise Men, prior to the birth of the sects, and the successive period; of the Seven Wise Men, Kant mentions Solon and Thales, the latter being the founder of the Ionic school, representing the transition from the first to the second period. Following Gentzken’s work, Kant begins the list of the Greek philosophical sects with those derived from the Italic school, beginning with Pythagoras, followed by Democritus, Epicurus and Pyrrho. He then moves on to the sects derived from the Ionian school, beginning with Thales, previously mentioned as one of the Seven Wise Men, followed by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Antisthenes and Zeno. As for philosophy in Roman times, which is not ordered according to schools in Kant’s plan or in Gentzken’s book, the names of Lucretius, Cicero, Pliny, Epictetus, Plotinus, and Boethius are listed. The note continues with a mention of medieval (Scholastic and Arabic) philosophy, and with regard to the modern age, Bacon, Descartes and Leibniz.

It is worth noting that, in this brief note, which, as we have said, constituted the outline on which Kant based his lectures on the history of philosophy for many years, there are no considerations, either historical or theoretical, concerning the problem of the birth of philosophy; that a large amount of space is devoted to the philosophy of the Eastern peoples; and that for Greek philosophy the traditional framework of the succession of sects is adopted and little attention is paid to Plato, Aristotle, or Epicurus. In this sense, Kant was merely following Gentzken’s textbook, which in turn was extremely similar, both in its periodization and historiographical theories, to most of the textbooks published in Germany in the first half of the century, from Thomasius to Brucker.

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<sup>16</sup>On the obligation students had, whatever their chosen discipline, to follow the course on logic at the beginning of their university studies, see the documents cited by E. Arnoldt, *Kritische Exkurse im Gebiete der Kantforschung*, Part 2, in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. O. Schöndörffer (Berlin, 1909), vol. 5, p. 227; on the merely propaedeutic nature attributed to the courses taught at the Faculty of Philosophy, cf. Arnoldt, *Kants Jugend*, p. 616.

### 10.3.2 Drafts of the History of Philosophy in the Years 1762–1764

Two more documents of great interest are the history of philosophy and the very short, schematic history of metaphysics included respectively in the fragment of *Logik* and in the *Einleitung in die Metaphysik*, both of which are included in Herder's *Nachschriften* of Kant's *Vorlesungen*.<sup>17</sup> Herder enrolled at the University of Königsberg on August 10th, 1762, and followed courses there until November 22nd, 1764. He first encountered Kant on August 21st, 1762, during a lecture on metaphysics.<sup>18</sup> It is very likely that the young Herder had already attended the logic course in the winter semester of 1762–1763; therefore, the general history of philosophy, included in the few pages on this course that have come down to us, should date back to that period. Although it is not very long, this presentation is complete and it enables us to identify both the elements of continuity and the new aspects of Kant's teaching compared to the plan included in *Reflexion 1635*, perhaps still used as an outline on that occasion. In Herder's *Nachschrift* there is no mention of the philosophy of the Eastern nations, with which, on the contrary, the historical presentation in *Reflexion 1635* began. The history of philosophy begins with the Greeks, and its birth is seen to emanate from the "freedom" the Greek people are supposed to have enjoyed, and in the "riches" and "honours" that the possession of the arts of culture are assumed to have procured under those free, republican governments (*Logik Herder*, XXIV, p. 3). This theory, which was to be developed extensively in other Kantian texts, was already to be found in Heumann. Heumann claimed that philosophy arose in Greece and not in the Eastern nations, thanks to free citizens in free republics and not among priests subjected to despotic authority, as was the case under the monarchies that dominated the Eastern peoples, among whom, for this reason, there could have been at best 'fragments of philosophy'.<sup>19</sup>

As far as the presentation of the history of ancient (Greek and Roman), medieval, and modern philosophy is concerned, Herder's *Nachschrift* follows the framework already tested in *Reflexion 1635* with few variations. It begins with the earliest age of Greek philosophy, namely that of the Seven Wise Men, here considered as still properly belonging to the prehistory of philosophy. This is followed by the list of

<sup>17</sup>The notebooks containing Herder's notes were first published by H.D. Imscher (*Immanuel Kant. Aus den Vorlesungen der Jahre 1762 bis 1764. Auf Grund der Nachschriften Johann Gottfried Herders*, "Kant-Studien Ergänzungshefte", no. 88, Köln, 1964) and later by Lehmann in the Academy edition (*Logik Herder*, XXIV, pp. 3–6; *Metaphysik Herder*, XXVIII, pp. 5–166, and XXVIII, pp. 843–961).

<sup>18</sup>On the relationship between Herder as a student and Kant, see the studies by G. Martin, 'Herder als Schüler Kants. Aufsätze und Kolleghefte aus Herders Studienzeit', *Kant-Studien*, XLI (1936), pp. 294–306, and by W. Dobbek, *Johann Gottfried Herders Jugendzeit in Mohrungen und Königsberg 1744–1764* (Würzburg, 1961), and to the *Einleitungen* by Imscher and Lehmann in their respective editions.

<sup>19</sup>On this theory by Heumann, cf. *Models*, II, pp. 413–414 and 422; see also H. Zedelmaier, *Der Anfang der Geschichte. Studien zur Ursprungsdebatte im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg, 2003), pp. 96–132.

Greek sects, starting, as in *Reflexion 1635*, with those that derived from the Italic school, from Pythagoras to Leucippus and Democritus, and ending with Epicurus. After Epicurus, in Herder's notes, come the Cynics: this is a novelty compared with the usual doxographical framework adopted previously by Kant, where this sect was placed among those deriving from the Ionic school, between Aristotle and the Stoics. As for the Cynics, mention is made of their Socratic derivation, their rebellion against social conventions, and their rejection of the "principle of pleasure" in ethics. In his lecture, Kant might have decided to place the Cynics alongside Epicurus with the aim of underlining the centrality of the moral problem and, at the same time, the radical opposition between their respective ethical ideals; if this was the case, this would be the first example, in Kant's writings, of a history of philosophy conducted according to the method of contrasting historical philosophical doctrines, at the same time trying to grasp the pure one-sidedness of the 'ideal type'.

Pyrrho brings the series of schools in the Italic succession to a close, and Kant moves on to the schools deriving from the Ionic: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics are listed in this order. Aristotle is judged positively for his natural history, politics, and rhetoric, negatively for his logic and metaphysics. In *Reflexion 1635*, his logic had been judged positively: the present negative verdict may be connected to Kant's depreciation of the syllogistic in the work on *False Subtlety*, published precisely in the autumn of 1762 as announcement of the programme of his lectures for the semester. In this work, Kant concluded by saying that it was necessary to get rid of the syllogistic, "the colossus, who hides his head in the clouds of antiquity, and whose feet are of clay", in order to focus, within the course on logic, on matters of greater usefulness (*Falsche Spitzfindigkeit*, II, p. 57). From the Greeks, he moves on to the Romans, denying them any originality in the field of philosophy. As far as the Middle Ages are concerned, the judgement is negative, which was customary in Kant and the historiography of his time. As for modern philosophy, Descartes is cited with admiration, "a model of thinking with his own head", but the dogmatism contrary to the master's teachings, which his followers displayed, is condemned. Finally, Leibniz, Wolff, Crusius, and the continuation of scholasticism in Catholic countries are mentioned. Herder's notes end with an exaltation of the thinker who is not tied to any school: "a philosopher cannot be a Wolffian or some such thing; he has to think for himself [. . .]. We shall take what is good from where it comes – the noble pride of thinking with our own heads, of being the first to discover for ourselves our own mistakes" (*Logik Herder*, XXIV, pp. 3–5).

The brief, schematic history of metaphysics contained in the 'Introduction to Metaphysics' is also of some interest (*Metaphysik Herder*, XXVIII, pp. 156–157). It is not a general history of philosophy like the previous ones, but a history of metaphysics (the first Kantian text of this kind to have come down to us), deriving from a course on metaphysics intended for students who were more advanced than those who usually followed the course on logic. It is very likely that the manuscript relates to a course held by Kant in the 1763–1764 winter semester or in the summer of 1764. The framework of periodization adopted for the presentation of the history of metaphysics is new: metaphysics, whose "origin is uncertain", is assumed to have



already existed, but only as a “doctrine”, “in the flourishing Greek states”, first with Pythagoras and then with the Sophists, Plato and Pyrrho; as a “discipline”, however, it is alleged to have arisen later with Aristotle, and must have been cultivated in the Middle Ages by the Scholastics, and by Peter Ramus in the modern age. Finally, as a “science”, metaphysics is considered to be a recent ‘fruit’, which has not yet fully ripened in the modern age; and Kant speaks of Bacon, Locke, Clarke, and Hume in England, of Descartes, D’Alembert, Diderot, and Condillac in France, but above all of Leibniz, Wolff, Rüdiger, Hoffmann, and Crusius in Germany, a country that “has a predisposition for this science”. In the note Kant observes that the English and Descartes were “physicists” rather than metaphysicists; there are also reservations about the two encyclopedists and Condillac; the motherland of metaphysics is Germany: the nationalistic ideal of Germany’s mission in the field of culture, merely hinted at here, was to meet with great success from the last 15 years of the century.

The novelty of this framework resides in the subdivision of the history of metaphysics into the three stages of “doctrine”, “discipline”, and “science”. This distinction can already be found in Meier’s compendium: “a doctrine is a set of dogmatic truths that have the same object. A discipline is a doctrine insofar as it has of this a methodical cognition. A proven discipline is a science [ . . . ]. Knowledge is always first a doctrine, then it is given the form of a discipline, and finally the form of a science, and with this it has achieved its utmost perfection”.<sup>20</sup> From the very outset of his teaching activity, Kant accepts the distinction used in the schools and found in Meier’s compendium, even as a criterion for evaluating progress in science. Moreover, perhaps already during the period when Herder’s manuscript was written, as *Reflexion 3388* seems to testify,<sup>21</sup> compared to Meier Kant tends to stress the difference between the two terms “doctrine” and “discipline”, setting one against the other and attributing the latter with a negative meaning as “the *compulsion* through which the constant propensity to stray from certain rules is limited and finally eradicated”, which the term “discipline” was later to acquire in the first *Critique* (*KrV*, A 709–710 B 737–738).

Here, in any case, Kant is still far from the context of criticism. The proposed framework can be interpreted as follows: at first metaphysics is thought to have been only a set of teachings on the supersensible; these early metaphysical adventures, Kant must have explained to his students, took place both in the direction of the

<sup>20</sup>G.F. Meier, *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre* (Halle: bey Joh. Justinus Gebauer, 1752), § 434 (repr. in XVI, pp. 809–810); cf. G. Tonelli, *Kant’s Critique of pure reason within the tradition of modern logic* (Hildesheim, 1994), p. 38 note; R. Pozzo, *Georg Friedrich Meiers Vernunftlehre* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 2000), p. 279; P. Rumore, ‘Logica e metodo. La presenza di Georg Friedrich Meier nella Disciplina della ragion pura’, *Studi kantiani*, XXIV (2011), pp. 93–104.

<sup>21</sup>*Refl. 3388* [1766–1770?], XVI, pp. 809; see also *Logik Blomberg* [1771], XXIV, p. 293: “Science is a complete discipline. With doctrine I direct my attention only to what is taught, with discipline I look to the method. Doctrine and discipline occur in historical cognitions as well as in dogmatic ones, then. With science there must always be doctrine”; *Logik Bauch* [1781–1784] (ed. T. Pinder), pp. 208–209.



positive affirmation of the possibility of this cognitive extension with Pythagoras and Plato, and in that of its firm negation with the Sophists and Pyrrho. At a later moment in time, an attempt was made to produce a system of rules in order to protect the intellect from the ill-effects of the errors towards which it was predisposed by its very nature. This second stage is assumed to have been inaugurated by Aristotle, whom, as is known, Kant considers to be the father of logic, following in this Gentzken and his own teacher, Knutzen, who were opposed to the widespread theory that tended to place the birth of logic in much earlier times.<sup>22</sup> One should not be surprised at Kant's positive appreciation, after the criticism of Aristotelian logic he had expressed in Herder's *Nachschrift* on logic and in the work of 1762: Kant's criticism, in those texts, concerned the syllogistic and its alleged euristic function, not logic, understood as the canon assessing our knowledge, as would later be asserted.

It is easier to explain the meaning of the third stage in the history of metaphysics, the one called 'scientific' in Herder's framework. Metaphysics as a "science" is the task of the modern age. It is a result that still has to be attained. For the moment, Kant favours the anti-Wolffians: besides Leibniz and Wolff, he quotes Andreas Rüdiger (with Christian Thomasius an exponent of the Halle circle and decidedly anti-Wolffian), his pupil Adolph Friedrich Hoffman, and Christian August Crusius, in turn a disciple of the latter, the most important representative of the speculative direction which was opposed to the rationalism of Wolff and his school during the German Enlightenment. It is not merely fortuitous that Herder's note concludes with a comparative examination of Wolff and Crusius' systems, taken (due to their radical contrast, regarded as a sign of a crisis that had not yet been overcome) as symbols of the two main trends in the field of metaphysics in the German Enlightenment. The comparison turns out to be in Crusius' favour, but Kant avoids identifying himself with the latter's positions since, as far as metaphysics is concerned, he approves of Crusius' reform of the method but reproaches him for his inadequate grounding of mathematics and of the science of nature. At this stage, Kant's relative proclivity for Crusius' philosophy is also visible in his works of this period: traces of it can be found in the 1762 text on logic (*Falsche Spitzfindigkeit*, II, p. 61) and, above all, in the *Prize Essay* concerning the principles of natural theology and morality presented to the Berlin Royal Academy of Sciences in December, 1763, and published in the following year, hence contemporary to the course on metaphysics Herder's note refers to: the arguments partly in favour of Crusius are similar to those presented in the essay published in 1764 (*Untersuchung über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der Theologie und der Moral*, II, pp. 290–296).

<sup>22</sup>Cf. F. Gentzken, *Ratiocinandi scientia, quam logicam vulgo nominant* (Hamburg: apud Th. C. Felgineri Viduam, [1725], 1735<sup>2</sup>), p. 1: "[Philosophiae rationalis] inventionem adscribunt Platoni, ita tamen ut systematicam eius dispositionem inprimis Aristoteli vindicent"; Knutzen, *Elementa*, p. 47: "[...] Sunt, qui Aegyptiorum Mercurium Triemegistum; alii vero, qui Zenonem Eleatem Logicae auctorem fuisse perhibent. Dubio interim caret, ex illis, quorum scripta aetatem tulerunt,, antiquissimum esse Aristotelem, qui nobis aliquot Logicae systema exhibuit; nec eiusdem in demonstrandis syllogismorum regulis spernenda est opera".

## 10.4 Speculative Crisis and Historiographical Reflection

If we now look at the years immediately after 1763 and the writings of the time, we can see the roots of the speculative position that was to shape Kant's theory concerning the historical development of metaphysics, the specific forms of his keen awareness of the historical nature of philosophy, and the consequences he was to draw from the latter regarding the methodology of the history of philosophy. This speculative position was consolidated in the following years and it then became typical of the critical Kant. By this time, Kant's interest in philosophy had clearly come to prevail over his interest in the science of nature. As is known, the works published in the period 1763–1766 express Kant's malaise and intolerance of a metaphysical knowledge that, lacking a unitary method and imprisoned in its abstract conceptualisations, had become totally alien to experience and to any form of intersubjective control. At the same time, Kant aspired to a new, more cautious metaphysics, one constrained within specific boundaries, yet endowed with a stringent, necessitating argumentative force, which would become scientific discourse by virtue of its being verifiable on the basis of criteria of falsifiability shared by everyone. What particularly concerned Kant at this time were not, as de Vleeschauwer observes, specific metaphysical problems: “another more general, more decisive, problem preoccupies him: the possibility of metaphysics as a science. The problem of the method and validity of metaphysics has imposed itself on his mind in all its extension, but above all in its problematic nature”.<sup>23</sup>

In this period, the idea of the link between the history of thought on the one hand and philosophical truth and its systematic structure on the other, which Kant was later to theorize in the first *Critique*, begins to emerge. He shows his awareness of the historicity of philosophy, both of that which preceded him and of his own, in the twofold sense; first, of recognising the non-accidentality of the different and opposed doctrinal constructions of the past for the historical emergence of truth, and, second, of the historical place proper to the new philosophy, which is no longer to be seen as an opinion but as a science, no longer provisional but definitive. The crisis of philosophy, that is to say, of the ultimate foundations of knowledge, in an age of extraordinary progress in all particular sciences, appears to Kant's eyes to be increasingly serious and unsustainable from day to day; the radical nature of the crisis tells him that the revolution that will finally elevate philosophy, once and for all, from the level of simple, historically given opinions to the status and dignity of science is imminent.

In the following pages, we will discuss three documents that offer a good picture of Kant's state of mind during those decisive years. In a letter of 31st December, 1765, to Lambert, the well-known author of the *Neues Organon*, with whom he had recently started corresponding, Kant writes that, “after many capsizeings”, he

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<sup>23</sup>H.J. de Vleeschauwer, *La déduction transcendantale dans l'œuvre de Kant*, Antwerpen-Paris, 1934, I, p. 93.

finally feels “secure about the method that has to be followed if one wants to escape the cognitive fantasy that has us constantly expecting to reach a conclusion, yet just as constantly makes us retrace our steps, a fantasy from which the devastating disunity among supposed philosophers also arises; for we lack a common standard with which to procure agreement from them”. His effort is mainly directed “at the proper method of metaphysics”, and – as he confesses to his friend – he nourishes the well-founded hope that he will soon achieve definitive results in this regard. Kant states that he shares Lambert’s harsh judgement on the reduction of the metaphysics of his time to vain talk but, unlike his colleague, he sees in this radical crisis, which involves the foundations of knowledge, a necessary condition, even if only negative and perhaps not sufficient in itself, for the solution of the problem of metaphysics: “[ . . . ] You complain with reason, dear sir, of the eternal trifling of punsters and the wearying chatter of today’s reputed writers. [ . . . ] I think, though, that this is the *euthanasia* of erroneous philosophy”; and he concludes: “before true philosophy can come to life, the old one must destroy itself; and just as putrefaction signifies the total dissolution that always precedes the start of a new creation, so the current crisis in learning magnifies my hopes that the great, long-awaited revolution in the sciences is not too far off” (X, pp. 55–57).

Similar considerations, with an added important clarification concerning method, are found in a letter written some months later (8th April, 1766) in reply to Mendelssohn, to whom Kant had sent a copy of the *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (*Dreams of a Spirit-Seer Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics*) in order to have his opinion of it. After reading the essay, Mendelssohn wrote back expressing his unfavourable,<sup>24</sup> due to the overall tone of the work, and in particular Kant’s opinion of the value of metaphysics. In his reply to Mendelssohn, Kant admits that in that occasional work “words were not sufficiently careful and qualified”; and he states, “[ . . . ] but I cannot conceal my repugnance, and even a certain hatred, towards the inflated arrogance of whole volumes full of what are passed off nowadays as insights”. In fact, for Kant, the method that has been chosen in dominant metaphysics “is completely wrong” (*ganz verkehrt*) and inevitably leads, in his opinion, to an infinite number of errors and prejudices; he believes that, in the current crisis of metaphysics, “even the total extermination of all these chimerical insights would be less harmful than the dream science itself, with its confounded contagion”. However, having affirmed not only his unconcealed antipathy, but also his hatred of the dominant metaphysics of his time in its being constructed according to a perverted methodology that leads to a multiplication of errors, Kant confesses to the Berlin philosopher that his hostility is only towards the metaphysics of his time. Indeed, his scepticism, his negative, critical tone, is intended only as an expedient in order to prepare the way for a

<sup>24</sup>The letter is not extant; Mendelssohn’s judgement can be drawn from the brief review he published in the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, IV, 2, 1767, p. 281: “The jocular profundity with which this little book is written leaves the reader for a time in doubt whether Mr Kant intended to make metaphysics ridiculous or spirit-seeing credible”.

positive metaphysics, removed from the reign of evanescent ‘reverie’ (*Träumerei*), regaining its own specific role in the field of human knowledge and finally brought back to the dignity of a science: “I am far from regarding metaphysics itself, *objectively* considered, to be trivial or dispensable; in fact I have been convinced for some time now that I understand its nature and its proper place among the disciplines of human knowledge and that the true and lasting welfare of the human race depends on metaphysics”; and he continues: “It befits brilliant men such as you to create a new epoch in this science, to begin completely afresh, to draw up the plans for this heretofore haphazardly constructed *discipline* with a master’s hand”. To Kant’s mind, in the present state of affairs in the field of metaphysics, the only achievable form of ‘scientificity’ (that is of intersubjective verification) of the contents of that presumed knowledge is of a negative nature: “I think it best to pull off its dogmatic dress and treat its pretended insights sceptically”; undoubtedly, the proposed method – Kant concludes – “will serve a merely negative purpose, [...] but it will prepare the way for a positive one” (X, pp. 70<sup>10</sup>–71<sup>4</sup>).

This theme can be found in the *Träume eines Geistersehers*, written in 1765 and published in January, 1766: taking his cue from a saying of Heraclitus’, which Kant attributed to Aristotle, “When we are awake we share a common world, but when we dream each has a world of his own”, he observes that one should therefore also be able to say: “If different people have each of them their own world, then we may suppose that they are dreaming”. And he continues: “On this basis, if we consider those who build castles in the sky in their various imaginary worlds, each happily inhabiting his own world to the exclusion of the others”, there being those that stand in Wolff’s world and those that stand in Crusius’ world, “we shall be patient with their contradictory visions, until these gentlemen have finished dreaming their dreams. For if they should eventually, God willing, awake completely, that is to say, if they should eventually open their eyes to a view which does not exclude agreement with the understanding of other human beings, then none of them would see anything which did not, in the light of their proof, appear obvious and certain to everybody else as well; and the philosophers will all inhabit a common world together at the same time, such as the mathematicians have long possessed”. He concludes: “This important event must now be imminent, if we are able to believe certain signs and portents which made their appearance some while ago above the horizon of the sciences” (*Träume*, II, p. 342).

In the writings quoted here, which well illustrate Kant’s ‘eschatological’ state of mind during this period,<sup>25</sup> we find the basic theoretical reasons for his interest in the history of philosophy. The radical nature of the crisis that the culture of the time was experiencing seems to him to announce an imminent revolution in the field of

<sup>25</sup> Richard Kroner (*Von Kant bis Hegel*, Tübingen [1921–1924], 1961<sup>2</sup>, I, pp. xv and 1–2) uses the expression “eschatologische Stimmung” to define the German cultural atmosphere at the end of the eighteenth century. Kantian philosophy was undoubtedly one of the causes of that climate; the expression may well also be used to define Kant’s state of mind in the years preceding the critical turning point.

metaphysics, which should eventually lead to the overcoming of the very historicity of philosophy. If the new metaphysics cannot be the fruit of history alone, due to the impossibility of elevating history to metaphysics, it is still true, however, that the worsening of the crisis makes a revolution possible and is, so to speak, its negative condition, necessary at least in fact, although not sufficient. The exercise of the elenctic and dialectic capacity of reason, which divests historically given doctrines of their dogmatic clothing, that is of their claimed absoluteness, and treats them sceptically, that is to say, sets each doctrine before its contrary and seeks the hidden foundations of their opposition, turns out to be, paradoxically, the only task that still has any theoretical significance. Comparison through the history of philosophy constitutes an essential stage in theoretical reflection itself. Here Kant finds, on a theoretical plane, the reasons for a constant comparison, within the coordinates of his own speculative position, with the doctrinal contents of the ancient and modern philosophical tradition.

## 10.5 The Role of the History of Philosophy in the Development of the Critical System: The Definition of a Historiographical Methodology

From the second half of the 1760s, in connection with the rise of the speculative crisis described above, we can document a greater, more personal and direct interest on the part of Kant (both in his teaching and in his research) in the history of philosophy. In the 1765–1766 *Nachricht*, also from the didactic point of view, Kant had explicitly recognised the “history of man’s opinions” as a useful introduction to philosophy.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, from the 1767–1768 winter semester, Kant also began to hold courses on the philosophical encyclopaedia, in which more space was given institutionally both to the general history of philosophy and to the history of particular philosophical disciplines. According to Arnoldt, who reconstructed

<sup>26</sup>*Nachricht*, II, p. 310<sup>31–32</sup>. In this text, Kant presents his known ‘pedagogy of learning to philosophise’ for the first time (pp. 306–308), which seems to suggest, within certain limits, a ‘historical’ teaching of philosophy: “the method of instruction, peculiar to philosophy is *zetetic*, as some of the philosophers of antiquity expressed it; [...] in other words, the method of philosophy is of *enquiry*. [...] The philosophical writer, for example, upon whom one bases one’s instruction, is not to be regarded as the paradigm of judgement. He ought rather to be taken as the occasion for forming one’s own judgement about him, and even, indeed, for passing judgement against him” (p. 307<sup>20–26</sup>). On this subject, cf. H.J. de Vleeschauwer, *La Nachricht von der Einrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in dem Winterhalben Jahre von 1765–1766 d’Immanuel Kant*, (Pretoria, 1965); Id., ‘Philosophie lehren – Philosophie lernen’, in *Tradition und Kritik. Festschrift für Rudolf Zacher zum 80. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1967), pp. 283–298; R. Malter, ‘Philosophieunterricht nach zetetischer Methode. Gedanken zur Didaktik der Philosophie in Ausgang von Kant’, *Zeitschrift für Didaktik der Philosophie*, III (1981), pp. 63–78; G. Micheli, ‘L’insegnamento della filosofia secondo Kant’, in *Insegnare filosofia*, ed. L. Illetterati (Novara, 2007), pp. 136–159.

the philosopher's teaching activity on the basis of the acts at the Königsberg State Archives, Kant must have held courses on the philosophical encyclopaedia for ten semesters: in the 1767–1768 and 1768–1769 winter semesters, in the summer semesters of 1769 and 1770, and again in the winters of 1770–1771 and 1771–1772; after a 3-year break, the course must have been held three more times in the second half of the 1770s: in the summer of 1775 and in the 1777–1778 and 1779–1780 winter semesters; the course was held for the last time in the winter of 1781–1782 (Arnoldt, *Kritische Exkurse*, pp. 214–225, 231, 233, 240, 245, 253, 262, and 337). The textbook used by Kant was Feder's *Grundriss der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, published in Coburg in 1767, which contained brief presentations of the history of philosophy, metaphysics, logic, natural philosophy, and ethics (see above, pp. 555–561), taken from Brucker's textbooks: the second edition of his *Historia critica philosophiae* had appeared in the same year. Unfortunately, the copy of the textbook Kant used for these courses has been lost and with it the notes he wrote in the margins and the numerous pages of notes he used to insert in the books he owned. Moreover, only one manuscript of notes taken by a student is extant, probably from a course held in about 1780.<sup>27</sup>

Wundt was the first to connect Kant's interest in the courses on the philosophical encyclopaedia to his wholly new attention to the history of philosophy, particularly ancient philosophy, that was developing during these years. He also pointed out that Kant's interest in these courses seems to be concentrated in the years between 1767 and 1772, after which it dwindled, and ceased completely after the publication of the first *Critique* (Wundt, *Kant als Metaphysiker*, Stuttgart, 1924, pp. 162–164). In the years from 1767 to 1772, Kant arrived at the formulation of some of the decisive theories of his future critical philosophy and then at the position, or, as it has also been called, the "invention" of the critical problem proper. From the short article of 1768 on the differentiation of directions in space, passing through the *aporias* produced by the notion of a unique, concrete, absolutely original space, proposed in that work, and the "great light" of 1769 (*Refl. 5037* [1776–1778], XVIII, p. 68), he reached a first turning-point, that of the *Dissertation* of 1770, with the introduction of the distinction between sensibility and understanding. Sensibility and understanding were conceived as two faculties capable of two non-interchangeable types of cognition, which are not different based on the degree of clarity, but according to their kind and origin (two kinds of cognition, each having its own forms and its own matter, a distinction that made the new doctrine of space and time possible, which in turn contained the key to the solution of the antinomies of the infinite and the paradoxes of the continuum).

Shortly afterwards, Kant arrived at a second turning-point, which was equally decisive for the genesis of criticism, as demonstrated in his famous letter to Marcus Herz of 21st February, 1772 (X, particularly pp. 130–131). In this letter Kant informs Herz of the further development of his reflections after 1770 (provoked

<sup>27</sup>The text, first published by Lehmann in 1961, was reprinted by the same editor in 1980 in the Academy edition (XXIX, pp. 5–45).

by the criticisms of Lambert, Mendelssohn, and others of subjective or sceptical idealism and psychologism in the doctrine expounded in his *Dissertation*), and he tells his friend that he is now devoting his attention to the difference between understanding (*Verstand*) and reason (*Vernunft*), and to the new problem of the foundations of the objectivity of cognition, a problem that, as he admits, he “had failed to consider” but that “in fact constitutes the key to the whole secret of metaphysics, hitherto still hidden from itself”. In the same letter, he also arrives at the first outline of a solution, albeit still a negative one, to the problem of objectivity, thereby posing the critical problem in its strictest sense. Indeed, he shows the inadequacy of both the realistic and the idealistic solutions to the question of how our representations can represent an object, using the same arguments (including the historical examples) that he was also to use in the first *Critique*.

### 10.5.1 The Distinction Between Sensibility and Understanding and the Platonic Tradition

In his monograph on Kant’s metaphysics, Wundt saw in the distinction between sensibility and understanding, or between intuition and concept, the problem that was to steer Kant’s reflections towards the ideas developed in his inaugural *Dissertation*, and he attributed the turning-point, or illumination, of the year 1769 to Kant’s deeper knowledge of Plato and of classical Greek thought.<sup>28</sup> He also attributed Plato with influencing the other decisive discovery which Kant was later to arrive at, in about 1776: the distinction between understanding and reason in the strictest sense, or between categories and ideas (Wundt, *Kant als Metaphysiker*, pp. 216–219). It is well known that interpreters and commentators have proposed different, and at times even contrasting, theories concerning the nature of the initial problem that may have led Kant to his *Dissertation*, and concerning the factors, if there were any, which influenced the illumination of 1769. We have already spoken of Wundt’s thesis; others have attributed a decisive influence to the problem of the antinomies of space or to that of causality, underlining, in parallel with the problem identified as the initial one, either the influence of Leibniz’s *Nouveaux Essais*, Hume, or still others.<sup>29</sup> It is probable that several problems, variously interlocked, were involved, as were the influences that contributed to the 1770 turning-point; very likely, the same can be said of the other later stages Kant had to go through in

<sup>28</sup>Wundt, *Kant als Metaphysiker*, pp. 153–178; on Plato’s influence on the 1770 *Dissertation* see also H. Heimsoeth, ‘Plato und Kant’, *Kant-Studien*, LVI (1966), pp. 349–372; Id., ‘Plato in Kants Werdegang’, in *Studien zu Kants philosophischer Entwicklung*, ed. M. Gueroult et al. (Hildesheim, 1967), in particular pp. 124–134; A. Nuzzo, ‘Idea and Ideal in Kant’s *De mundi sensibilis atque intelligibilis forma et principiis*’, in *New Essays on the Precritical Kant*, ed. T. Rockmore (Amherst, NY, 2001), pp. 224–238; U. Santozki, *Die Bedeutung antiker Theorien für die Genese und Systematik von Kants Philosophie* (Berlin, 2006), pp. 55–71.

<sup>29</sup>For an overall picture of the different opinions, cf. de Vleeschauwer, *La déduction*, I, pp. 147–148.



his journey towards the *Critique*. Whichever theory is preferred, it seems to us that one cannot deny at least that the problem of antinomies, later called mathematical antinomies (the only ones that Kant unquestionably had in mind at the end of the 1760s) ended up by becoming confused with the problem of space. In the same way, the theory – formulated in the brief essay *Concerning the Ultimate Foundation of the Differentiation of Direction in Space* (1768) – of absolute and original space, independent of the existence of all matter, not an object of outer sensation, but rather a fundamental concept (*Grundbegriff*) which first of all makes all outer sensation possible, could not but, in light of the proofs provided by geometry on the maximum clarity of spatial representations (above all when compared to that of cognition through the pure concepts of metaphysics), present Kant with the problem of the inadequacy of the Leibnizian-Wolffian doctrine. This forces him to seek the reason for the distinction between sensuous cognitions and intellectual cognitions in something other than the simple difference in the degree of the clarity of representations, leading him to see in them, platonically, two entirely different and, so to speak, heterogeneous sources.

Even if we do not want to agree completely with Wundt's thesis, it is without doubt that the basic doctrine in the *Dissertation* of 1770, that is to say, the distinction in kind between sensuous cognition and intellectual cognition, which was to become one of the fundamental elements in Kant's future critical philosophy, was introduced by means of an explicit reference to ancient philosophy. In § 3 at the beginning of Section II, Kant writes: "*Sensibility* is the *receptivity* of a subject [ . . . ] *Intelligence* (rationality) is the *faculty* of a subject in virtue of which it has the power to represent things which cannot by their own quality come before the senses of that subject. The object of sensibility is the sensible; that which contains nothing but what is to be cognised through the intelligence is intelligible"; and he notes: "In the schools of the ancients, the former [*sensibile*, sensible] was called a *phenomenon* and the latter [*intelligibile*, intelligible] a *noumenon*. Cognition, in so far as it is subject to the laws of sensibility, is *sensuous*, and, in so far as it is subject to the laws of intelligence, it is *intellectual* or rational".<sup>30</sup>

The difference between sensuous cognition (*cognitio sensitiva*) and intellectual cognition (*cognitio intellectualis*) recalls for Kant the different nature, or "quality", of the respective objects, the sensible and the intelligible. The sensible is not the intelligible confusedly cognised, as Leibniz first and Wolff later had maintained due to their rationalist tendency to reduce things to thinkable or possible objects. Kant recognises in sensuous cognition the capacity of being 'distinct' equal to intellectual cognition, thus separating the object of sensuous cognition from that of intellectual cognition and moving the question from the field of logic to that of ontology.

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<sup>30</sup>*Diss.*, II, § 3, p. 392. Here Kant distinguishes the faculties of the mind into *sensibilitas* (sensibility) and *intelligentia* (intelligence); the definition of sensibility is identical to the one he was to give in the first *Critique* (*KrV*, A 19 B 33). On the other hand, *intelligentia* and *intellectus* refer to the higher cognitive faculty as a whole: in the *Dissertation*, the distinction between 'understanding' (*intellectus*, *Verstand*) and 'reason' (*ratio*, *Vernunft*) has not yet been made.



Recognising this meant reviving the distinction, found to his mind in classical Greek philosophy, between *phaenomena* and *noumena* (an ontological distinction between modes of being, the being of appearances [phaenomena] and the being of things in themselves [noumena]). It also meant bringing the problem of the definition of the concept of science, the theory of science or epistemology, back to the ontological problem concerning the different origin of the two degrees of human cognition and the nature of the respective objects.

A little further on, in § 7, Kant expresses his thesis very clearly, referring once again to the classical ancient tradition and, at the same time, criticising the fact that the doctrine has been forgotten in the modern age: “[...] the sensuous [*sensitivum*, that which belongs to the sensibility] is poorly defined as that which is *more confusedly* cognised, and the intellectual [*intellectuale*, that which belongs to the understanding] as that of which there is a *distinct* cognition”; the differences between degrees of cognition cannot be reduced to differences concerning distinctness “for these are only logical distinctions which *do not touch* at all the things *given*, which underlie every logical comparison”. Indeed, we have sensuous cognitions that are utterly distinct, such as the geometrical ones, and intellectual cognitions, which belong to understanding, which are extremely confused, as usually happens in metaphysics. Nonetheless, Kant writes, “each and every one of these cognitions preserves the mark of its descent”: geometrical cognitions, however distinct, are sensuous, and metaphysical ones, however confused, remain intellectual. Kant concludes § 7 by repeating his criticism of Wolff: having interpreted the distinction (*discrimen*) between sensuous representations (*sensitiva*) and representations which belong to the understanding (*intellectualia*) as a purely logical distinction, he “completely abolished, to the great detriment of philosophy, the noblest of the enterprises of antiquity, the discussion of the *character of phaenomena and noumena*”, and turned men’s minds away “from that enquiry to things which are often only logical minutiae” (*Diss.*, II, § 7, pp. 394–395).

The ontological distinction between phenomena and noumena, or between “sensible things” (*sensibilia*) and “intelligible things” (*intelligibilia*) corresponds, in the context of cognition, to the distinction between “sensuous cognitions” (*sensitiva*, *cognitio sensualis*, *repraesentatio sensitiva*, that is to say, what is sensitively given) and “intellectual cognitions” (*intellectualia*, *cognitio intellectualis*, that is to say, cognitions which belong to understanding), which depends on, and derives from, the former.<sup>31</sup> For Kant the two different levels, that of being and that of knowing, must be kept strictly distinct since the latter is founded on the former: sensibility and understanding give rise to two different kinds of cognition, and these kinds of cognition do not differ in clarity and distinctness but in the kinds of objects they have and the kinds of concepts they engender. This concern is manifested through a

<sup>31</sup>*Diss.*, II, §§ 3–5, pp. 392–393; cf. also *Refl.* 4446 [c. 1772] and 4449 [c. 1772], XVII, pp. 553–556. On the distinction between the ontological and the gnoseological planes, cf. also *Refl.* 4893 [1776–1778], XVIII, p. 21<sup>16 and 20</sup>: “[...] Distinction between phaenomenorum and noumenorum\*. [...] \*(Distinction in objects or in the cognition of them)”.

constant attention to the way the terms are used both in the *Dissertation* and (later) in the first *Critique*.<sup>32</sup> Kant's Latin terminology is taken for the most part from Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae*, in particular from the chapter on Plato's philosophy and from the references to the Eleatic Platonic tradition included in the chapter on ancient Scepticism, where the distinction between *intelligibilia* and *sensibilia*, between νοητά and αἰσθητά, between νοούμενα and φαινόμενα, can be found (Brucker, I, pp. 673, 690, and 1332). The discussion concerning the use of the terms reappears a few years later in the first *Critique*, and then again in a note added in the second edition: in these texts, Kant explicitly refers to the ancients, who correctly distinguished the two planes, that of knowing and that of being, whereas "in the writings of the moderns" the lack of a terminological distinction seems to hide a conceptual confusion.<sup>33</sup>

The distinction between the plane of knowing and the plane of being – like the distinction, as far as the plane of being is concerned, between the being of the phenomenon and the being of the noumenon, between the sensible world (*mundus sensibilis*, *Sinnenwelt*) and the intelligible world (*mundus intelligibilis*, *Verstandeswelt*) – refers to the Eleatics and above all to Plato, both in the *Dissertation* and, again, in the first *Critique*. In the *Dissertation* the first reference to Plato is found in § 9, where the "noumenal perfection", which was to become the "transcendental ideal" in the *Critique*, is identified with the Platonic idea, and then in § 25, where the object of the pure intellectual intuition of God is mentioned, "which Plato calls an idea".

Kant talks about the Eleatics and those who were influenced by their school at the end of § 12, which concludes Section II (§§ 3–12) of the *Dissertation*, which is dedicated entirely to the ontological problem of the distinction between the being of the phenomenon and the being of the noumenon. In that section, as far as ontology was concerned, Kant had recalled the ancient tradition, and more specifically the Platonic one, criticizing the modern tradition. Starting from the common premises, however, in the following section he will draw conclusions which, as to the theory of science in particular, radically diverge from those of the Eleatic-Platonic tradition. The theory of time and of space as the formal principles of the sensible world enables Kant to show – as he will do in detail in Section III of the *Dissertation* (§§ 13–15) – that "the laws of sensibility", that is to say, the primary axioms of space and time, are at the same time "laws of nature, in so far as nature falls within the scope of the senses" (*Diss.*, 2, § 15, pp. 404<sup>30–31</sup>).

<sup>32</sup>On the consistency of the terminology used by Kant in the *Dissertation* (and on its translation into English) cf. D. Walford, 'Note to Glossary', in I. Kant, *Theoretical philosophy 1755–1770* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 487–489.

<sup>33</sup>*KrV*, A 256–257 B 312: "[...] only *cognitions* are intellectual or sensuous. But that which can only be an *object* of the one mode of intuition or the other, the objects therefore, must be called intelligible or sensible [...]."

The Eleatic-Platonic theory of science is, so to speak, entirely overturned: “pure mathematics” (that is, geometry, pure mechanics, and arithmetic), “which explains the form of all our sensuous cognition, is the organon of each and every intuitive and distinct cognition; and since its objects are not merely formal principles of all intuition but themselves *originary intuitions*, it provides us with a cognition which is in the highest degree true, and, at the same time, it provides us with a paradigm of the highest kind of evidence in other fields”; for this reason, unlike the Eleatics and Plato, Kant believes that “*there is a science of sensible things*, although, since they are phenomena, the use of the understanding in reference to them is not real but only logical; from this it is clear – he concludes – in what sense we are to suppose that science was denied in the case of phenomena by those thinkers who derived their inspiration from the Eleatic School”.<sup>34</sup> Kant, therefore, thinks that a science of phenomena is possible, although according to a different meaning of the term ‘phenomenon’ or ‘appearance’, and also of the term ‘science’. The ‘science of sensible things’, which Kant, unlike the ancients, admits, is the modern science of nature, first of all Newton’s physics, which deals with “appearances” (*Erscheinungen*), that is, with objects not as they are, but as they appear. Appearances, however, are not mere *illusory* appearances (*Scheine*), because the forms of intuition are necessary conditions of sensible objects; the logical use of understanding, which is common to all the sciences, does not eliminate the sensible nature of cognitions, which is due to their source, but turns ‘appearances’ into ‘experience’, that is into ‘reflective cognition’ (*cognitio reflexa*). The latter stems from various ‘appearances’ that are compared with one another by the activity subordinating concepts, which in turn is carried out by judgement and reasoning on the basis of the logical first principles: the form of sensuous cognition on the one hand, according to which and within which it is possible to coordinate what is given to the senses (*Diss.*, II, §§ 4–5, pp. 392–394), and the logical use of the understanding on the other hand, which applies to these forms of intuition, explain for Kant the possibility of the ‘sciences of the phenomenon’, namely, sciences whose principles “are given intuitively, whether it be by sensuous intuition (experience) or by sensuous but pure intuition (the concepts of space, time and number), that is to say, in natural science and mathematics” (*Diss.*, II, § 23, pp. 410<sup>20–23</sup>).

Therefore, due to the condition of intuition, which for human beings cannot but be sensuous, Kant believes, unlike the ancients, that there cannot be science of what is purely intelligible. There can be science, thanks to the pure or formal element of sensuous intuition, only of what is given to the senses. Ultimately, the difference between Kant and the Eleatic-Platonic tradition depends on the different conception of mathematics, which for Kant, as it had been for Plato (in Kant’s

<sup>34</sup> *Diss.*, II, § 12, pp. 397<sup>28</sup>–398<sup>7</sup>; see also *Metaphysik Mrongovius* [1782–1783], XXIX, pp. 758<sup>35</sup>–759<sup>7</sup>; *Metaphysik Dohna* [1792–1793], XXVIII, pp. 618<sup>37</sup>–619<sup>2</sup>; *Metaphysik Vigilantius* (K3) [early 1790s], XXIX, p. 951<sup>4–14</sup>; *Fortschritte*, XX, p. 277<sup>7–9</sup>.

interpretation), is ‘*cognitio verissima*’, that is to say, cognition in the highest degree true, “a paradigm of the highest kind of evidence in other fields”, founded on pure intuitions, which, however, belong to sensibility and not to the understanding (as the ancients mistakenly believed).<sup>35</sup>

The *Dissertation* of 1770, in its basic lines of thought, can therefore be read and interpreted as a critical comparison with the tradition of Platonism. The turning-point of 1769, if not determined by, was at least accompanied, significantly, by a systematic reflection on the fundamental themes of the Platonic tradition, which Kant partly accepted, partly rejected, yet always discussed, according to a constant methodology, from the standpoint of a general theoretical and speculative set of problems; Kant’s thought seems indeed to become clearer, in his more innovative theories (with respect to the tradition of modern rationalism), by means of the critical reference to the Eleatic-Platonic tradition; be that as it may, he refers to that tradition in order to expound the aspects of his thought that he believes to be speculatively most significant.

### 10.5.2 The Problem of the Objectivity of Cognition and the Tradition of Idealism and Empiricist Realism

The same may also be said of the following phase in Kantian reflection. As we know, the *Dissertation* of 1770 does not fully succeed in founding the *scientia sensualium*, the science of sensible things; the discovery of the pure forms of sensible intuition is one of its presuppositions, but it alone is not enough: the unity of the object, the physical relationships of causality, and the unity of phenomena are problems that the 1770 work does not mention, or, as in the case of the latter problem, merely provides temporary solutions that were no longer acceptable even to Kant in 1770; he himself defines them as “mystical”, referring to Malebranche, when in Section IV of the *Dissertation* he takes God as the basis of the unitary whole of contingent substances linked to one another by the relationship of cause and effect (*Diss.*, §§ 20–22; in part. II, p. 410<sup>12–16</sup>). In the *Dissertation*, the formal problem of unity still concerns the metaphysical structure of the world, not the epistemological structure of the object. More generally, in the 1770 work the role of the understanding is still not clear: there is no distinction between the understanding and reason, or between the categories of the understanding and the ideas of reason, and the question of the objectivity of concepts, which will then become the problem of the transcendental deduction of categories, has not yet been posed.

The famous letter to Marcus Herz of 21st February, 1772, which has already been cited, retraces the history of Kant’s reflections after the publication of the *Dissertation* and shows that at that time he had already posed at least the second of the above-mentioned problems. For the first time, in this letter, Kant raises the

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<sup>35</sup>Cf. Heimsoeth, ‘Plato in Kants Werdegang’, in particular pp. 134–143; G. Micheli, *Matematica e metafisica in Kant* (Padua, 1998), in particular pp. 54–63.

question of the grounds of the relationship between “intellectual representations” (or pure concepts of the understanding) and objects given through experience. Dogmatic rationalism overestimates the capacities of our cognitive faculties: concepts do not produce the object in the same way as the divine *intellectus archetypus* creates the thing in the very act of intuiting it; on the other hand, objects do not produce intellectual representations in the same way as a cause produces its effect: empiricism, on the contrary, underestimates our cognitive faculties and fails to account for the pure and a-priori character of the concept. In the *Dissertation*, Kant had been “content to explain the nature of intellectual representations in a merely negative way, namely, to state that they were not modifications of the soul brought about by the object”, but he had not yet discussed “the further question of how a representation that refers to an object without being in any way affected by it can be possible”: in that text, he had restricted himself to claiming that “the sensuous representations present things as they appear, the intellectual representations present them as they are”. But – Kant now wonders – if this is the case, “by what means are these things given to us, if not by the way in which they affect us? And if such intellectual representations depend on our inner activity, whence comes the agreement that they are supposed to have with objects – objects that are nevertheless not possibly produced thereby? And the axioms of pure reason concerning these objects – how do they agree with these objects, since the agreement has not been reached with the aid of experience?” If the theory of the transcendental ideality of space and time can provide a reply as far as mathematical knowledge is concerned, “because [in mathematics] the objects before us are quantities and can be represented as quantities only because it is possible for us to produce their mathematical representations by taking numerical units a given number of times”, as far as physical and metaphysical knowledge is concerned (the letter still speaks of general representations of reality, irrespective of whether they were phenomena or noumena), the question remains unsolved: “as to how my understanding may, completely *a priori*, form for itself concepts of things with which concepts the facts should necessarily agree, and as to how my understanding may formulate real principles concerning the possibility of such concepts, with which principles experience must be in exact agreement and which nevertheless are independent of experience – this question, of how the faculty of the understanding achieves this conformity with the things themselves is still left in a state of obscurity” (*Letter to M. Herz*, 21st February, 1772: X, pp. 130–131).

In this case too, Kant turns to the history of philosophy. The problem concerning the objective validity of intellectual notions, or the degree of objectivity of a concept, is not a new one; on the contrary, it is one of those speculative problems that have continually recurred in the history of thought and that are capable of conferring an exemplary, ‘typical’ meaning to philosophical systems that are otherwise complex, historically determined and quite different from one another. In the letter to Marcus Herz, Kant recalls some of the solutions that have been variously proposed to the problem concerning the definition of the concept of science: that of Plato, who “assumed a previous intuition of divinity as the primary source of the pure concepts of the understanding and of first principles”; that of Malebranche, who “believed

in a still-continuing perennial intuition of this primary being”; that of the English moralists, who “have accepted precisely this view with respect to basic moral laws”; and, lastly, that of Crusius, who had invented a sort of divine preformation, that is to say, a theory according to which our mind is supposed to be made in order to agree with things by nature.<sup>36</sup>

If we look at Kant’s argumentative method, we find that the historical consideration of doctrines takes place, both in this letter and always thereafter in later texts, starting out from a specific theoretical problem and according to a well-defined methodology: each doctrine is understood in its fundamental theses, while aspects that are regarded as secondary or merely of detail are ignored; any encounter with a past theory is extended to a consideration of other positions. The latter are linked to the former not so much through historically verifiable references but through the shared speculative theme. Kant is concerned with the universal, with the ‘type’: only within this ‘type’ does the single doctrine, in its historical specificity, acquire significance: this explains Kant’s effort to order, according to a systematic standpoint, the positions that gradually emerge in the course of history, to place them under one concept and to classify them. Subjectivist idealism and empirical realism are two, contrasting, very general categories to which a multitude of solutions to the problem concerning the definition of the concept of science can be traced back. However, Kant goes beyond typifying possible solutions. His presentation of the different theories concerning the foundations of the objectivity of understanding in the letter to Marcus Herz constitutes, within the framework of the argumentation developed by Kant in this text, a step towards determining the fundamental problem of metaphysics through the identification of the ‘possible’ positions concerning this issue. Kant develops a historiographical discourse, but this discourse demonstrates rather than informs.

In the letter to the Berlin physician, and more explicitly and clearly in the notes he wrote in the decade 1770–1780, particularly in those written for his lessons (which we shall examine below), and also in the last chapter of the first *Critique* itself, Kant captures and tends to accentuate, from the diverse positions that emerged in the course of the history of thought, the reciprocal opposition and the unilaterality of each one, with the aim of attaining the exact determination of the problem through this detailed survey. In the letter to Marcus Herz there is no trace of the critical solution to the problem of objectivity, for which we must wait until the pages on transcendental deduction, but we have, nevertheless, the position of the problem, the *positio quaestionis*, of the *Analytic* (cf. de Vleeschauwer, *La déduction*, I, pp. 169–172). According to a historiographical methodology characteristic of Kant, and afterwards of the Kantians, it is important to identify the possible positions in order to attain, through this survey, an exact definition of the problem, the identification

<sup>36</sup> *Letter to M. Herz* (21st February, 1772), X, p. 131; *Refl.* 4275 [1770–71], XVII, pp. 491–492: “[...] Crusius explains the real principle of reason on the basis of the *systemate praeformationis* (from subjective *principiis*); Locke, on the basis of *influxu physico* like Aristotle; Plato and Malebranche, from *intuitu intellectuali*; we, on the basis of *epigenesis* from the use of the natural laws of reason [...]”.

of the precise terms of the conflict on the speculative plane, which is the necessary, albeit insufficient and negative, condition for the solution to the *aporia*. On account of the role that the historiographical survey therefore assumes in philosophical research, Kantian methodology tends intentionally to trace historical philosophies back to the pure unilaterality of the type, accentuating reciprocal contraposition, with the aim of underlining the state of speculative crisis, the stalemate, the problem of reason and the *aporia*. The philosophical crisis that historiographical research contributes to highlighting fully has, for Kant, only a negative meaning: in no way does it produce a solution to the problem; it merely enables the latter to be produced positively, but through the contribution of further factors that are in themselves extraneous to the historical plane.

### 10.5.3 Towards the *Critique*: (a) The Problem of Metaphysical Deduction and the Aristotelian Tradition; (b) The Distinction Between Understanding and Reason, and Plato

In the years from 1770 to 1780, the knowledge gained from the history of ancient and modern philosophy played an important role in the genesis of criticism. Here we shall restrict ourselves to a few examples. In the letter to Herz of February, 1772, in which, as we have said, Kant presents the problem of objectivity for the first time, he also refers to the Aristotelian table of categories and criticises the approximate procedure followed by the Greek philosopher in constructing it.<sup>37</sup> In Kant's interest in this attempt by Aristotle – whom, contrary to the prevailing tendency of his century he does not discredit, but merely reproves for his lack of a euristic principle<sup>38</sup> – we perhaps find the first traces of what was to become, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the problem of the metaphysical deduction of categories.<sup>39</sup> The

<sup>37</sup>Letter to M. Herz (21st February, 1772), X, p. 132; Kant would express himself in similar terms 9 years later (*KrV*, A 81 B 107).

<sup>38</sup>On the Aristotelian tradition in eighteenth-century German culture in relation to the formation of criticism, we refer readers first to the pioneering studies by G. Tonelli, 'La tradizione delle categorie aristoteliche nella filosofia moderna sino a Kant', *Studi Urbinati*, XXXII (1958), pp. 121–137, and 'Das Wiederaufleben der deutsch-aristotelischen Terminologie bei Kant während der Entstehung der Kritik der reinen Vernunft', *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, IX (1964), pp. 233–242 (on the Aristotelian doctrine of categories: pp. 236–237). On the influence of the Aristotelian tradition concerning the doctrine of categories see also G. Micheli, 'La terminologia aristotelico-scolastica e il lessico kantiano', in *La presenza dell'aristotelismo padovano nella filosofia della prima modernità*, ed. G. Piaia (Rome and Padua, 2002), in particular pp. 445–454; Santozki, *Die Bedeutung antiker Theorien für die Genese und Systematik von Kants Philosophie*, pp. 96–110; Sgarbi, *La Kritik der reinen Vernunft nel contesto della tradizione logica aristotelica*, in particular pp. 187–208.

<sup>39</sup>For A. Riehl, *Der philosophische Kritizismus* (Leipzig, 1924<sup>3</sup>), I, p. 289, Kant had already arrived at metaphysical deduction in 1772; for de Vleeschauwer, *La déduction*, I, pp. 215–216, in the letter to Herz, properly speaking, there is only the statement of the problem of metaphysical deduction, that is to say the acknowledgement of the need not to proceed by chance as Aristotle was thought to have done.

same can be observed about the clear distinction between reason and understanding, and between ideas (*Vernunftbegriffe*) and categories (*Verstandesbegriffe*): it is a viewpoint Kant reaches fairly late, after 1775, when he would come to believe it to be of fundamental importance for the destiny of metaphysics, so much so that “if the critique of pure reason had done nothing but first point out this distinction, it would thereby have already contributed more to elucidating our conception of, and to guiding inquiry in, the field of metaphysics, than have all the fruitless efforts undertaken previously to satisfy the transcendent problems of pure reason” (*Prol.*, IV, pp. 328–329). It is hard not to see Plato’s influence as the source of this distinction; Wundt in particular insisted on the derivation of this Kantian doctrine from the Platonic tradition (as he had previously done for some basic theses in the 1770 *Dissertation*); in this case, too, he saw Brucker’s *Historia critica* as the intermediary between Kant and the ancient tradition<sup>40</sup>; moreover, Kant himself seems to confirm this theory in the well-known passage at the beginning of his *Dialectic*: “Plato made use of the expression *idea* in such a way that we can readily see that he understood by it something that not only could never be borrowed from the senses, but that even goes far beyond the concepts of the understanding (with which Aristotle occupied himself)” (*KrV*, A 313 B 370).

We could mention numerous examples of the links between Kant and the ancient and modern philosophical tradition. There is nothing new in saying that various historical elements greatly contributed to leading Kant’s thought towards the solutions adopted in his mature criticism. Kant himself was well aware of this, and thought that this was an essential component of the job of the philosopher: in a letter to Garve in August, 1783, 2 years after the first *Critique* appeared and a few weeks after the publication of the *Prolegomena* (written, we read in the preface, not for those who reduce philosophy to a mere eclectic collection of historical reminiscences, but for those who think for themselves: *Prol.*, IV, p. 255), in a tone that sounds like a reflection on his own development as a thinker, he observes: “People’s efforts continue in a constant circle, returning always to the point where they started; but it is possible that materials that now lie in the dust may yet be worked up into a splendid construction” (*Letter to Ch. Garve*, 7th August, 1783: X, p. 341); and in a note of uncertain, though certainly late, date, we read: “if a person wants to be an inventor, he claims to be the first; if a person only wants the truth, he needs predecessors” (*Refl.* 2159 [1776–1778?], XVI, p. 255; cf. also *Refl.* 778 [1772–1773], XV, pp. 340–341, and *Über eine Entdeckung*, VIII, pp. 250–251).

Certainly, one can observe that each philosophy re-elaborates earlier material; yet only with Kant, then with the Kantians and Idealism, does this task become explicit. In the history of philosophy, for Kant, it is only by starting from the result,

<sup>40</sup>Wundt, *Kant*, pp. 163 e 217; that Kant’s knowledge of Plato depends on Brucker’s *Historia critica* has been fully demonstrated by G. Mollowitz, ‘Kants Platoauffassung’, *Kant-Studien*, XL (1935), pp. 13–67; Brucker, in turn, substantially took up the Hellenistic and Patristic (and above all Augustinian) interpretation of Plato’s doctrine of ideas; cf. also Heimsoeth, ‘Plato in Kants Werdegang’, pp. 126–127.



that is from the definitive solution given positively by the critique of reason, that it is possible to determine the meaning of past philosophies, which constitute, as a whole, the process by means of which this result has been attained. The doctrines of the past, divested of their contingent nature as purely individual opinions following one another in time, acquire significance and value, together with the transparency of intelligibility, which is denied to pure singularity, that is to say, to what pertains to the psychological experience of the individual philosopher; if, in the process of ‘typifying’ past systems enacted by Kant, it may seem that part of their historical individuality is to some extent lost, this occurs because the specificity of each system can then really be regained within the universality of the kind, which alone is relevant and intelligible for a historical point of view, such as that of Kant, who looks at past philosophies as partial and unilateral expressions of the truth of which critical philosophy is an adequate expression.

## 10.6 Historiographical Practice in the Critical Period

From the second half of the 1760s, Kant’s interest in the history of philosophy – which as we have seen, accompanies his theoretical reflection and, to a certain degree, also marks the most significant stages of its development towards the critical turning-point – became actual historiographical activity, involving the organisation and complete arrangement of historical material according to schemes and methods that were gradually elaborated in his theoretical reflection. The texts which show this work are, to a great extent, connected to Kant’s teaching activity. As we have seen when examining the few documents concerning the period prior to the turning-point of the mid-1760s, his course on logic, a propaedeutic course, included in its introductory part a brief presentation of the entire history of philosophy, in addition to the history of logic; similarly, brief presentations of the history of philosophy and of the main philosophical disciplines were included in the courses on the philosophical encyclopaedia; the courses on metaphysics and ethics contained respectively, as introductions, brief presentations of the history of metaphysics and of ethics.

The most important documents consist of the additions to the text of *Reflexion 1635*, examined above; the *Reflexionen zur Logik 1636–1648*, which were outlines prepared by Kant for his introductory lectures on the history of philosophy and the history of logic for his course on logic<sup>41</sup>; and the histories of philosophy, metaphysics, logic, and ethics contained in the numerous notebooks of students who followed Kant’s courses between 1770 and 1796, first during the genesis of criticism, then in its systematic presentation, especially in the great works of the 1780s. We have numerous notebooks, compiled according to different criteria, frequently copies of notes rather than notes taken directly during the lectures, which

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<sup>41</sup>XVI, pp. 56–65; the most complete outline is found in *Refl. 1636* [1760–1770?], XVI, pp. 60–61.

at times, as in the case of the most well-known *Vorlesungen* on ethics, those edited by Menzer, depend on a single archetype. For the nature and history of these texts, we refer readers to the Academy edition.<sup>42</sup> As far as our work here is concerned, it is important to observe the substantial uniformity of the texts dating back to the above-mentioned years and the full correspondence between the historical notes that Kant prepared for the lectures and that were found in Kant's *Nachlaß*, and the historical expositions included in the *Vorlesungen*. Other Kantian texts can also be added to these documents, for example the *Reflexionen zur Metaphysik 4446–4451* (XVII, pp. 553–556), notes written by Kant also probably for teaching purposes, and the last chapter of the first *Critique* itself, the above-mentioned *History of Pure Reason*, which can be likened, in its schematic nature and expository aims, to the documents pertaining to Kant's historiographical activity as a teacher.

We shall not examine each text in detail, and we refer readers to our earlier work (*Kant storico della filosofia*, pp. 145–183 and 206–214). Here, we restrict ourselves to identifying some of the fundamental theories presented by Kant and the indications for a historiographical method that can be drawn from these texts.

### 10.6.1 The Problem of the Beginnings of the History of Philosophy

A first set of topics concerns the question of the 'birth' of philosophy. Kant's interest in Oriental philosophy, which had never been particularly strong, now vanished completely. As a premise to his exposition, he now begins to put forward some historical and theoretical considerations on the origins of philosophy, which lead him to exclude the culture of Oriental peoples from the history of philosophy proper. First, Kant wonders what, in general, the causes of the development of the arts and the sciences are; he then seeks a criterion that can enable him to establish a date for the birth of philosophy proper within the framework of the more general progress of mankind in the cultural field; finally, he wonders in what order, and for what theoretical and historical reasons, the different sciences, in particular the various disciplines which, as a whole, constitute the philosophical knowledge, gradually arose and when they developed from a pre-scientific to a scientific state. The order of these questions, and their object, does not differ much from what we find in German historians of philosophy and culture in the late Enlightenment; however, some of the proposed answers are typical to Kant.

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<sup>42</sup>The most important and complete presentations of the history of philosophy (or metaphysics) are contained in *Logik Blomberg* [1771], XXIV, pp. 31–37; *Logik Philippi* [1772], XXIV, pp. 323–339; *Metaphysik L1* [early to mid 1770s], XXVIII, pp. 175–177; *Warschauer Logik* [c. 1780] (ed. T. Pinder), pp. 515–518, 524–530; *Metaphysik Mrongovius* [1782–83], XXIX, pp. 757–765; *Wiener Logik* [early 1780s], XXIV, pp. 796 and 800–804; *Logik Heschel* [1782] (ed. T. Pinder), pp. 295–303; *Metaphysik Volckmann* [1784–85], XXVIII, pp. 367–376; *Metaphysik v. Schön* [1789–90 or 1790–91], XXVIII, pp. 466–468; *Metaphysik L2* (Pölitiz) [1790–1791?], XXVIII, pp. 535–540; *Metaphysik Vigilantius (K3)* [1794–95], XXIX, pp. 956–959; *Logik Jäsche*, IX, pp. 27–33).

As far as the causes of the general development of culture are concerned, Kant's theory is well-known. The arts and the sciences only develop in mankind as a result of antagonism, which produces inequality among men and the division of labour. The theory is already very clearly stated in the *Historia philosophiae* at the beginning of the *Logik Philippi* (an *Abschrift* that very probably derives from the course on logic held in the summer of 1772) and in Kant's notes, written at about the same time, among them one that he added to *Reflexion 1636* (XVI, p. 56<sup>4-5</sup>) and *Reflexion 1637* (XVI, p. 61). The theory was then to be developed, in more articulated forms, in the *Conjectural Beginning of Human History* of 1784 and in a well-known passage from the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, and also, albeit in partly different contexts, in his political writings and in the works on the philosophy of history and the philosophy of law. In order to dedicate oneself to science, it is necessary for a social class to be able to enjoy leisure and be free from any material needs: "When one is in need, and forced to live in hardship, one does not turn to science; on the contrary, when one lives in ease, one is captured by curiosity". The origins of civilisation lie in the "violence" perpetrated by one man over another, which "produces inequality", which is the reason why one is a master and the other a servant; "the ease of some and the toil of others, who are forced to keep those in ease, this was the beginning of sciences" (*Logik Philippi*, XXIV, p. 323). This theory, which is derived from Aristotle (*Metaph.* 981 b 20–21), recalls a fundamental aspect of Kant's conception of man and history, his radical anthropological pessimism combined with a sharp teleological optimism: culture, that is the rational activity transforming nature, is on the one hand the outcome of the division of labour, and on the other produces, in turn, a gradual increase in individual and class antagonism.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *KU*, V, § 83, p. 432: "Skill cannot very well be developed in the human race except by means of inequality among people; for the majority provides the necessities of life as it were mechanically, without requiring any special art for that, for the comfort and ease of others, who cultivate the less necessary elements of culture, science and art, and are maintained by the latter in a state of oppression, bitter work and little enjoyment, although much of the culture of the higher class gradually spreads to this class. But with the progress of this culture (the height of which, when the tendency to what is dispensable begins to destroy what is indispensable, is called luxury) calamities grow equally great on both side because of violence imposed from without, on the other because of dissatisfaction from within; yet this splendid misery is bound up with the development of the natural predispositions in the human race, and the end of nature itself, even if it is not our end, is hereby attained". On the tie between the development of culture, on the one hand, and the growth of antagonisms, division of labour and increase in the causes of the real inequality among men, on the other, see also *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte*, Fourth Proposition, VIII, pp. 20–22, and *Muthmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte*, VIII, pp. 118–121. On the more general theme of the Kantian philosophy of history, see K. Weyand, *Kants Geschichtsphilosophie. Ihre Entwicklung und ihr Verhältnis zur Aufklärung*, in "Kant-Studien Ergänzungshefte", no. 85 (Köln, 1964); W.A. Galston, *Kant and the Problem of History* (Chicago and London, 1975); Y. Yovel, *Kant and the Philosophy of History* (Princeton, 1980); A. Philonenko, *La théorie kantienne de l'histoire* (Paris, 1986); *Kant's Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim. A Critical Guide*, A.O. Rorty and J. Schmidt eds (Cambridge, 2009).

The social caste among which sciences generally began to be cultivated was that of the priests, thanks precisely to their state of being privileged and without any material needs. At first, this fact conditioned the development of culture negatively, hindering in particular any effective progress in the field of philosophy. To support his theory, in these and other later texts, Kant cites the example of Egypt, the country which was the first to form social classes that enjoyed the condition of economic privilege necessary in order to be able to dedicate themselves to the sciences. However, the Egyptians did not manage to develop rational research adequately due to their almost total dependence on religion. The only peoples that did dedicate themselves to the sciences, and “philosophised speculatively and independently of religion” were the Chinese and the Greeks; however, for Kant political organisation also conditions the development of the sciences, particularly that of philosophy. With Confucius philosophy is no longer in the service of religion, as in Egypt: he wrote about ethics, not a religious text, yet Confucian ethics aimed at educating the ruling class and was used in China as a tool of government, taking the place of religion in that political system; “it [philosophy] could not develop because it was tied to the government, just as Egyptian philosophy was impeded by religion”: “you can’t philosophise” in a state of subjection to religion or political power (*Logik Philippi*, XXIV, pp. 323–324; see also *Refl. 1637* [1765–1775], XVI, p. 61).

Philosophy, like “everything that is science” in general, was born in the free city-states of Greece, where economic well-being, the widespread indifference towards religious myths, and political freedom seem to have permitted, for the first time in history, the unrestricted expansion of antagonisms, which is the condition for the development of culture. However, as far as the birth of philosophy proper is concerned, it was a fairly late development even in Greece, since one cannot yet call philosophy the purely gnostic knowledge (through sentences and images) of the Seven Wise Men and the early poets. This is certainly not a new theory, even in Kant. However, from the 1770s Kant was concerned to provide theoretical justifications for this theory, admitting that “it is not easy to make a clear distinction between wisdom (*Weltweisheit*) and science (*Wissenschaft*)”; yet it is possible to distinguish between “the common use of reason and the speculative, that is scientific, use of it”; if we define “speculative cognition”, that is to say, philosophy, as the “cognition of the universal obtained from concepts *in abstracto*”, then we have a theoretical criterion for distinguishing philosophy in the proper sense from pre-philosophical cognition (that is the “cognition of the universal *in concreto*”, by means of images and sensible representations) of the Orientals and early Greek thinkers (*Refl. 1635*, later additions to the text [1760–1778], XVI, p. 56<sup>6–7</sup> and 58<sup>21–25</sup>). Later, in the *Vorlesungen* of the last decade, Kant was to say that “from this determination of the distinction between common and speculative use of reason we can now pass judgment on the question with which people we must date the beginning of philosophising” (*Logik Jäsche*, IX, p. 27; see also *Metaphysik L2* (Pölitz), XXVIII, 2, 1, p. 535).

This might seem a purely formal criterion on the part of Kant, and to a certain extent it is. However, if we look in particular at the writings of the 1780s, such as the *Geschichte der Metaphysik* included in the *Metaphysik Mrongovius* (1782–

1783) and at the *Metaphysik Volckmann* (1784–1785), but also at earlier or later writings, we can see that the capacity, which was acquired relatively late and gradually, to express oneself not through images but through concepts, that is, to speak “in the language of pure reason”, is connected to a turning-point which is also related to the content of philosophy, to a speculative discovery, that is to say, to the capacity to distinguish between the sensible object, known through the senses, and the intelligible object, known through intelligence.<sup>44</sup> It is not only a step forward in the field of language: one is freed from the highly imaginative, wholly concrete language of poetry, which is gradually substituted by the abstract, technical language of philosophy. This is undoubtedly an important achievement, but for Kant it was definitively reached only with Aristotle. From a speculative point of view, it is something more significant: a distinction is made on one hand between “phenomenon” and “noumenon” and, on the other, between sensibility and understanding. In other words, one can say that for Kant, philosophy arose when at a certain point in Greek history something took place which was similar to a turning to the “*logoi*” of which the Platonic Socrates speaks in the *Phaedo* (99d–e); and, subsequent to this, a veritable turn-about, a revolution in the field of thought, took place due to the discovery of the intelligible. This also explains the reason why, in the works written between 1770 and 1790 in particular, but also in later works, Kant makes philosophy, taken in its proper sense, begin with Pythagoras, with the school of Elea, with Anaxagoras, and with Plato,<sup>45</sup> completely ignoring not only the Seven Wise Men and the poets, but also the early Ionic thinkers, whom, if he mentions occasionally as a sort of tribute to doxographic tradition, he always considers simply “physicists” or “mathematicians”, not philosophers or metaphysicists (cf. *Refl.* 5660 [1776–1778], XVII, p. 318; *Refl.* 6232 [1782–1783], XVIII, p. 518; *Refl.* 1635 (later addition to the text [1760–1778]), XVI, pp. 58<sup>27</sup>–59<sup>9</sup>). Finally, concerning Pythagoras he quotes the metaphysics of the number, and probably thanks to the influence of Meiners and Tiedemann, and only very late, does he consider Pythagoras’ activity as a religious and political reformer.

Philosophy was thus born in Greece, first as metaphysics, with the discovery of the distinction between the being of the phenomenon and the being of the

<sup>44</sup>*Metaphysik Mrongovius*, XXIX, pp. 758–759: “At the time of Pythagoras and the Eleatic sect there reigned a philosophical system where objects of the senses and of the understanding (*Verstand*) were distinguished. The first were called sensibles (*sensibilia*) and phenomena, the other intelligibles (*intelligibilia*) and noumena”; cf. also *Metaphysik Volckmann*, XXVIII, p. 370; *Metaphysik LI*, XXVIII, p. 175<sup>16–18</sup>; *Metaphysik v. Schön*, XXVIII, p. 466; *Refl.* 4449 [1772–1775], XVII, pp. 555–556; *Prol.*, IV, § 32, p. 314: “Already from the earliest days of philosophy, apart from the sensible beings [*Sinnenwesen*] or appearances (*phenomena*) that constitute the sensible world, investigators of pure reason have thought of special intelligible beings [*Verstandeswesen*] or *noumena*, which were supposed to form an intelligible world; and they have granted reality to the intelligible beings alone, because they took appearance (*Erscheinung*) and illusion [*Schein*] to be the one and the same thing [ . . . ]”; *Fortschritte*, XX, p. 335<sup>2–6</sup>: “What did the ancients want with metaphysics? To know the supersensible. This distinction is old as philosophy. By *noumena* they conceived of all objects, so far as they could be known a priori [ . . . ]”.

<sup>45</sup>*Refl.* 1636, XVI, p. 60<sup>19–25</sup>; see, moreover, the texts cited in note 44.

noumenon, therefore as a doctrine of being. This theory is also confirmed in the places where Kant tackles the theme of the order in which the various sciences and parts of philosophy are supposed to have appeared and subsequently developed. In the final chapter of the first *Critique*, and likewise, with rather similar arguments and expressions, in the *Vorlesungen* on metaphysics, Kant observes: “it is remarkable enough, although it could not naturally have been otherwise, that in the infancy of philosophy human beings began where we should now rather end, namely, by studying first the cognition of God and the hope or indeed even the constitution of another world” (*KrV*, A 852 B 880; see also of the many texts, *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, XXIX, p. 757; *Metaphysik Volckmann*, XXVIII, p. 367; *Metaphysik Vigilantius* (K3), XXIX, p. 956<sup>36</sup>–957<sup>14</sup>).

That theology historically precedes physics depends, for Kant, first on the interest man has in the question of his own final destiny. The natural need to find an answer to this question is such that it is not possible to stop speculating about God and the soul even when one has to recognise continual failures in the efforts made in this field of knowledge. Yet there is also another reason that explains the chronological precedence of theology over natural science: “in order to attain rational principles in physics, a continual diligence in observation and a difficult collection of data are necessary, while every man can find the ideas of the intellect and of reason in himself” (*Metaphysik Volckmann*, XXVIII, p. 368<sup>8–11</sup>; *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, XXIX, p. 757). Theology deals with cognitions that transcend the sensible world, for which experience can be neither a guide nor offer any control: “if one is beyond the circle of experience, then one is sure of not being refuted through experience. The charm in expanding one’s cognitions is so great that one can be stopped in one’s progress only by falling into a clear contradiction. This, however, can be avoided if one makes one’s inventions carefully, even though they are not thereby inventions any the less”; just as “the light dove”, cleaving in free flight the air whose resistance it feels, believes it can fly better in airless space, when, on the contrary, it is precisely the air that permits it to fly, “likewise, Plato abandoned the world of the senses [...], and dared to go beyond it on the wings of the ideas, in the empty space of pure understanding” (*KrV*, B 8–9). This illusion, combined with the real interest that these cognitions have for reason, promoted the development of research in the field of the supersensible.

Ethics is closely connected to theology: “there could be no more fundamental and reliable way of pleasing the invisible power who rules the world, in order to be happy at least in another world, than the good conduct of life”; metaphysics (which for Kant, once the cosmological question has been dissolved, comes down to the problem of God and the soul) and ethics derive from theology.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>46</sup>*KrV*, A 852–853 B 880–881; cf. also *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, XXIX, p. 757; *Metaphysik Volckmann*, XXVIII, p. 367. The treatment of cosmology in *KrV* is not as homogeneous as it is for psychology and theology, and the *Antithetic* shows that the cosmological question, unlike the psychological and theological one, is not a true metaphysical problem: mathematical antinomies are grounded on a contradictory concept, and their conflict turns out to be non-existent; dynamic antinomies do indeed express ideas in their theses (freedom, necessary being) that are non-

### 10.6.2 The Progress of Knowledge

As far as the progress of reason is concerned, although it occurs gradually, it is not continual for Kant, at least not until a certain threshold has been reached for each discipline. In the well-known first pages of the 'Preface' to the second edition of the first *Critique*, Kant observes that, if we look at knowledge as a whole, it develops by degrees; mathematics "entered the secure path of a science with the marvellous Greek people"; for physics, this happened later, in the modern age, with Galileo, Torricelli and Stahl; logic had already become a science with Aristotle and from then on, thanks to the advantage of "its own delimitation", made steps neither backwards nor forwards, and "therefore seems to all appearance to be finished and complete". That a certain science should take "much longer to find the highway of science" seems to depend, for Kant, as much on the nature of its object as on chance factors. If one looks at each discipline and considers it in itself, in its history, one notes that its development is decidedly discontinuous: there are periods when apparently confident steps forward are made and progress seems to move on with a constant rhythm; what happens, however, is that knowledge is accumulated, but without method, through "uncertain attempts"; these are followed by periods of crisis, when reason "becomes embarrassed", becomes tied up in inextricable contradictions, has to turn back and "once again, several times start anew, setting off down a different path"; finally, at times thanks only "to the happy inspiration of a single man", at times thanks to the "enlightened revelation" of some researchers, a radical innovation is produced in the field of that science, a true revolution, which makes it possible to escape from the situation of stalemate and from the indifference that the repeated crisis may have determined, and the discipline in question is set on "the secure course of a science" after "simply groping about" for centuries. From that moment for that science there will be a constant and continuous progress: "the road to be taken onwards can no longer be missed, and the secure course of a science is entered on and prescribed for all time and to an infinite extent".<sup>47</sup> In Kant, the conception of scientific progress depends on his epistemology: a true science, precisely because it is true, always requires a methodological principle that directs the scientist's research in one direction rather than in another; this holds for both the pure sciences, such as mathematics and pure physics, and the empirical ones. The sure possession of such a principle marks, for each discipline, the step towards becoming a science.<sup>48</sup>

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contradictory and compatible with the ideas expressed by their relevant antitheses, but they refer to disciplines that are different from rational cosmology, that is, to psychology (and ethics) and to theology. Kant seems to want to find a confirmation, even on the historical plane, of the reduction of authentic metaphysical problems to the theological one (the existence of God) and to the psychological-moral one (immortality, spirituality and freedom).

<sup>47</sup> *KrV*, B VII–XV. On this aspect of Kantian epistemology, cf. R. Brandt, 'Kant-Herder-Kuhn', *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, V (1980), pp. 27–36.

<sup>48</sup> *KrV*, A 834 B 862: "Nobody attempts to establish a science without grounding it on an idea"; see also *Über den Gebrauch teleologischer Principien in der Philosophie*, VIII, p. 161: "[...] only



The same rules are also valid for metaphysics: it is only that this discipline, which for Kant, as we have seen, was born in Greece, “has not yet been fortunate enough to set off down the secure path of science”; in metaphysics, and more generally in philosophy, the phase of discontinuous development, “through uncertain attempts”, has not yet been overcome; the “revolution in the way of thinking” that occurred in mathematics and physics has not yet been attained; in metaphysics, when faced with problems that are for man natural and inevitable, reason “becomes embarrassed”, because each of the proposed solutions, all of which have the ambition of offering an exhaustive, definitive solution to the problems, is constantly faced by the contrary solution; despite their reciprocal opposition, all doctrines are flawed by the same mistake, yet they are unable to discover it because the grounds, or the reason, for their opposition remains hidden. The continual disputes among the different philosophical schools make the history of metaphysics (but also of ethics and, more generally, of every philosophical discipline) “a battlefield, and indeed one that appears to be especially determined for testing one’s powers in mock combat; on this battlefield no combatant has ever gained the least bit of ground, nor has any been able to base any lasting possession on his victory”.<sup>49</sup> The state of crisis and stalemate, however serious it may become, does not in itself provide a solution, just as it did not for mathematics or physics; the crisis in the field of metaphysics had already arisen in the ancient world and also reoccurs with more or less similar characteristics in the modern age; more simply, “the tedium and complete indifferentism”, which spread unavoidably “after all paths (as we persuade ourselves) have been tried in vain”, helps us to reach a more detached consideration of the problems, which can be “the origin, or at least the prelude, of their incipient transformation and enlightenment” (*KrV*, A x).

### 10.6.3 The Method of Exposition

That the history of metaphysics, and more generally of philosophy, is reduced to the almost constant repeated proposal of contrasting doctrines can easily be seen in the outlines used by Kant to organise and expound historical material. In the critical period, the outlines used for his *Vorlesungen* are exactly the same as those that can be found in the *Critiques*. Kant’s procedure is dichotomic; he proceeds in his argumentation by opposing system to system, and the historical analysis mainly assumes a form similar to the division of a concept into two parts according to

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*methodically* conducted experience can be called *observing*”; *KU*, V, § 66, pp. 376–377: “[...] experience of the kind that is methodically undertaken and is called observation [...]”.

<sup>49</sup> *KrV*, B xiv–xv; see also *Fortschritte*, XX, p. 335: “[...] all philosophies are essentially not at variance until the critical [...]”. On the merely ‘dialectic’ opposition (*scheinbarer Widerstreit*) among the moral systems of the Ancients, cf. particularly *KpV*, V, pp. 111<sup>18</sup>–112<sup>26</sup>; on the identity of the cause of the errors of all philosophers, both ancient and modern, “with respect to the supreme principle of morals”, despite the diversity and even radical opposition of the principles proposed, cf. *KpV*, V, p. 64<sup>5</sup>–65<sup>4</sup>.



the diæretic method of Platonic origin. The forms of opposition that Kant records are of different types: they range from the simple relationship of relation to the different forms of contrariness, to the relationship of privation and possession, to affirmation and negation, that is, to the highest form of opposition, that between contradictory opposites. If in some cases Kant inserts a third doctrine between two opposing doctrines, it never assumes the meaning of a ‘synthesis’ of contradictories but rather that of an intermediate term between contrary opposites.

We shall restrict ourselves here to illustrating the Kantian procedure only in general terms. As far as the Greek philosophical schools are concerned, Kant distinguishes between schools of a “solely practical” leaning, that is, those that merely stated moral precepts (and here in general he recalls the Cynic and Stoic schools, in addition to Socrates), and schools of a “theoretical” bent, which, besides the theme of ethics, dealt with the metaphysical problem of the definition of the concept of science, which was fundamental for Kant. Among the theoretical philosophers, Kant distinguishes the “dogmatics” from the “sceptics” (see in particular *Refl.* 1636 and 1644 [1769?, 1773–1775?], XVI, pp. 60–61 and 63–64; *Logik* Blomberg, XXIV, pp. 206–207). On this first level of subdivision, the term ‘dogmatic’, like the term ‘sceptic’ that is opposed to it, has not yet assumed a negative meaning. In Kant, indeed, the term ‘dogmatic’ also has a positive value, when it refers to the structure of philosophy, which must as a science always be ‘dogmatic’, that is to say, a demonstrative discourse, which not only states how things stand but is also capable of demonstrating that they cannot be otherwise; the term assumes, on the contrary, its better-known negative meaning when it refers “to dogmatism, that is, to the presumption of getting on solely with pure cognition from (philosophical) concepts”; both the positive and the negative meaning are inherited by Kant respectively from the German Scholastic tradition and from the Sceptic tradition: ‘dogmatic’, when opposed to ‘historical’ (*historisch* in the sense of *faktisch*), ‘empirical’ and *a posteriori*, means ‘universal’, ‘rational’ and *a priori*; when opposed to ‘problematic’ and ‘critical’, it has the negative meaning of ‘unjustified’.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>*KrV*, B xxxv–xxxvii: “Criticism is not opposed to the *dogmatic procedure* of reason in its pure cognition as science (for science must always be dogmatic, i.e., it must prove its conclusions strictly *a priori* from secure principles); rather, it is opposed only to dogmatism, i.e., to the presumption of getting on solely with pure cognition from (philosophical) concepts according to principles, which reason has been using for a long time without first inquiring in what way and by what right it has obtained them”; there is no confusion between criticism and *Popularphilosophie* or, even worse, scepticism: “Rather, criticism is the preparatory activity necessary for the advancement of metaphysics as a well-grounded science, which must necessarily be dogmatic”; this is followed by the well-known praise of Wolff, “the greatest among all dogmatic philosophers, who gave us the first example [...] of the way in which the secure course of science is to be taken, through the regular ascertainment of the principles, the clear determination of concepts, the attempt at strictness in the proofs, and the prevention of audacious leaps in inferences; for these reasons he had the skills for moving a science such as metaphysics into this condition, if only it had occurred to him to prepare the field for it by a critique of the organ, namely pure reason itself: a lack that is to be charged not so much to him as to the dogmatic way of thinking prevalent in his age; and for this

Among the philosophers who are “dogmatic”, according to an as yet undecided meaning of the term, Kant makes a further distinction, opposing “sensual philosophers” (*Sensualphilosophen*) to “intellectual philosophers” (*Intellectualphilosophen*), that is to say, by opposing those who “asserted that reality is in the objects of the senses alone, and that everything else is imagination”, to those who “said that in the senses there is nothing but illusion (*Schein*), and that only the understanding cognizes that which is true”. For Kant the most eminent philosopher of pure sensibility is Epicurus, whom he at times associates with Leucippus and Democritus; among the “intellectual philosophers”, the most important, as we know, is Plato, with whom he always associates those who, in his interpretation, preceded him in the discovery of the intelligible, that is to say, the fathers of metaphysics: Pythagoras, Parmenides and the school of Elea, and Anaxagoras.<sup>51</sup>

In the field of historiography, the distinction between sensual philosophers and intellectual philosophers corresponds to the theoretical distinction between sensibility and understanding, taken to mean two, non-interchangeable faculties capable of cognitions that differ not on the basis of the degree of clarity but according to kind and origin. Kant believes he can retrace this distinction, which he made as early as in the 1770 *Dissertation*, to ancient Greek philosophy, and he blames modern philosophers for having let it fall into disuse. The opposition between “Epicureanism” and “Platonism” expresses the eternal contrast between the merely speculative interest (“What can I know?”) and the purely practical interest (“What should I do?”) of reason. In the ‘Antinomy of Pure Reason’, Kant indicates with the expression “pure *empiricism*” the maxim of all affirmations of antithesis, and with the expression “*dogmatism* of pure reason” the maxim of all affirmations of the thesis (*KrV*, A 465–466 B 493–494). Kant calls “all subjective principles that are taken not from the constitution of the object but from the interest of reason in regard to a certain possible perfection of the cognition of this object, *maxims* of reason”; these are the principles of systematic unity in the use of the intellect, which are founded on an interest of reason and have a heuristic value; between the two maxims “there is not a true conflict, but it is merely a different interest of reason that causes a divorce between ways of thinking”; there is, of course, no contradiction

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the philosophers of his as of all previous times have nothing for which to reproach themselves”. On the twofold meaning of the term ‘dogmatic’, pointed out in the above texts, cf. also G. Tonelli, ‘Kant und die antiken Skeptiker’, in *Studien zu Kants philosophischer Entwicklung* (Hildesheim, 1967), pp. 95–96.

<sup>51</sup> *KrV*, A 853–854 B 881–882; cf. also, to restrict ourselves to the most significant texts, *Refl.* 1636, XVI, pp. 60–61; *Refl.* 1643 [1764–1768?], XVI, p. 63; *Refl.* 1644, XVI, p. 64<sup>3–4</sup>; *Refl.* 4449, XVII, pp. 555–556; *Refl.* 4451 [1772–1778], XVII, p. 556; *Refl.* 4894 [1772–1778], XVIII, p. 21<sup>22–24</sup>; *Logik Blomberg*, XXIV, 1, p. 207; *Logik Philippi*, XXIV, 1, 327–330; *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, XXIX, 1, 2, p. 759; *Metaphysik Volckmann*, XXVIII, 1, pp. 370–376; on Epicurus also as a philosopher of sensibility in the field of ethics, see *KpV*, V, pp. 24 and 40, and *KU*, V, p. 331; on Kant’s interpretation of Epicurus see also K. Düsing, ‘Kant und Epikur. Untersuchungen zum Problem der Grundlegung einer Ethik’, *Allgemeine Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, I, 2 (1976), pp. 39–58; A. Boyer, *Kant et Épicure. Le corps, l’âme, l’esprit* (Paris, 2004).

if these principles are applied correctly, that is to say if they are considered merely as “maxims”, that is subjective, regulative principles, and not objective, constitutive principles (*KrV*, A 666 B 694).

In the history of philosophy, according to Kant, Platonism corresponds to the “dogmatism of pure reason” and Epicureanism to “pure empiricism”. On the side of Platonism there is mainly a practical interest: “that the world has a beginning, that my thinking self is of a simple and therefore incorruptible nature, that this self is likewise free and elevated above natural compulsion in its voluntary actions, and finally, that the whole order of things constituting the world descends from an original being, from which it borrows all its unity and purposive connectedness – these are so many cornerstones of morality and religion”. On the side of Epicureanism there is the speculative interest of reason: “the understanding is at every time on its own proper ground, namely the field solely of possible experiences, whose laws it traces, and by means of which it can endlessly extend its secure and comprehensible cognition”. In this way, Kant identifies a non-theoretical criterion of choice (“the interest of reason”) between different, opposite metaphysical systems and at the same time a principle for explaining their diversity and equal legitimacy. Platonism and Epicureanism are both “dogmatic”, in the negative sense of the term, and inevitably lead to the antithetic of pure reason if their respective principles are expounded as objective affirmations; they are not if their respective principles are expounded as maxims of the speculative use of reason conforming to its interest, respectively practical and architectonic and speculative. Kant maintains that this, perhaps, was the case of Epicurus, in which case “he would have shown as genuine a philosophical spirit as any of the sages of antiquity”.<sup>52</sup>

Yet Kant goes further in the subdivision of the concept. Among the philosophers on the intellectual side, namely, those who admitted the possibility of intellectual cognitions, Kant further distinguishes between those, like Plato, and before him Pythagoras and Parmenides, who made them derive from an intellectual intuition of intelligible objects, however this intuition and its possibility were then conceived, and those, like Aristotle, who derived all intellectual cognitions, even the pure concepts of the understanding and the ideas of reason, from experience, thus explaining everything in terms of empirical or abstract “concepts of reflection”. The distinction is also formulated by Kant in the form of the opposition between a “mystic” conception (*intellectualia per intuitus*) and a “logical” conception (*intellectualia per conceptus*) of the cognitions of the understanding; in the former case, the human understanding has been conceived as intuitive (Plato), in the latter as merely discursive (Aristotle). Kant also admits, in several texts and as an hypothesis, that the Platonic conception of science was not “mystic” like that of Pythagoras or

<sup>52</sup> *KrV*, A 462–476 B 490–504; cf. also *KrV* A 853–854 B 881–882; on these sections, see H. Heimsoeth, *Transzendente Dialektik. Ein Kommentar zu Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Berlin, 1966–1971), II, pp. 259–276, and IV, pp. 822–825. On the Kantian origin of the distinction between ‘rationalism’ and ‘empiricism’ see A. Vanzo ‘Kant on empiricism and rationalism’, *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, XXX (2013), pp. 53–74.

Parmenides; indeed, Plato does not speak of a still present intuition of the intelligible object, but of man's soul which is made to participate, before being united with the body, in original, divine, creative intuition: this is presumed to be the meaning of his doctrine of recollection and of the mysterial theories concerning the origin of the soul that it presupposes.

However, even without "mysticism", the problem is encountered again in the field of the history of philosophy in fairly similar terms: are the concepts of the understanding "innate", that is, independent of all experience, as Plato claimed, or are they "derived entirely from experience", as Aristotle maintained? As should by now be clear, formulated in these terms, as a conclusion to the lengthy procedure subdividing the concept, the question now refers directly to the basic theme in the first *Critique*, already enounced in its classic form in the first pages of the 'Introduction': "although all our cognition commences *with* experience, yet it does not on that account all arise *from* experience" (*KrV*, B 1); Plato and Aristotle each privileged one side of the question and completely ignored the other. In the modern age the contrast between philosophical schools was to reappear in exactly the same terms: Malebranche, with his theory of the vision of all things in God, reawakened Platonism in its most decidedly "mystic" form; Leibniz took up Platonic innatism; even Crusius, in admitting the criterion of true and false as innate, renewed Platonism; Locke, on the other hand, resumed Aristotle's empiricism. As we can see, the controversy is renewed in precisely the same terms in the modern age, without reaching any solution; all that has been done is to establish the precise framework of the problem of the definition of science, from which Kant's critical enquiry was to start.<sup>53</sup>

If we now take a step backwards and return to the other half of Kant's division of the concept of the theoretical and speculative philosopher, that is to say, the Sceptics, we find that he follows exactly the same procedure. Among the ancient Sceptics, Kant distinguishes the "zetetics" from the "academics": the former "suspended their judgement, and researched"; the latter "judged definitively that nothing can be demonstrated"; the former used doubt as a method of research, the latter transformed doubt into a dogmatic affirmation; Kant includes Socrates, Pyrrho and Sextus Empiricus among the former, and, among the latter, Arcesilaus, Carneades and the Academics in general.<sup>54</sup> From the beginning of the 1770s Kant prefers the

<sup>53</sup>Cf. *Refl.* 1636, XVI, p. 60<sup>11-16</sup>; *Refl.* 1643, XVI, p. 63<sup>10-15</sup>; *Refl.* 4446 [c.1772], XVII, p. 554; *Refl.* 4447 [1772-1778], XVII, p. 555; *Refl.* 4449, XVII, p. 556<sup>1-11</sup>; *Refl.* 4451 [1772-1778], XVII, p. 556; *Refl.* 4868 [1776-1778], XVIII, p. 15; *Refl.* 4893 [1776-1778], XVIII, p. 21<sup>16-20</sup>; *Refl.* 4894 [1796-1798], XVIII, p. 22; *Logik Philippi*, XXIV, p. 327<sup>27-31</sup>; *Metaphysik Volckmann*, XXVIII, pp. 371-375; *Metaphysik Mrongovius*, XXIX, pp. 760-763; *KrV*, A 854 B 882; on the Locke-Leibniz opposition, see also *KrV*, A 270-271 B 326-327.

<sup>54</sup>*Refl.* 1636, XVI, p. 60<sup>26</sup>; *Logik Blomberg*, XXIV, pp. 36 and 207-218; *Logik Philippi*, XXIV, p. 330; *Metaphysik LI*, XXVIII, p. 176<sup>21-26</sup>. On the double meaning of the term 'sceptic', cf. Tonelli, 'Kant und die antiken Skeptiker', pp. 93-123; see also Santozki, *Die Bedeutung antiker Theorien für die Genese und Systematik von Kants Philosophie*, in particular pp. 117-126; M.N. Forster, *Kant and Skepticism* (Princeton and Oxford, 2008), in particular pp. 16-20.

term ‘zetetics’ to indicate the first group rather than the more compromised term ‘sceptics’ (see *Nachricht*, II, p. 307<sup>21</sup>; *Refl.* 3957 [1769], XVII, p. 366<sup>10–11</sup>; *Refl.* 4455 [1772], XVII, p. 558<sup>1–2</sup>). However, in the first months of 1770, he already distinguishes between *scepticismus criticus* and *scepticismus dogmaticus*<sup>55</sup>; in about the same period, the expression *methodus sceptica* (sceptical method)<sup>56</sup> appears; scepticism as a method is identified with the method of placing in reciprocal contrast cognitions that appear dogmatic and that are not granted any prevailing right to assent<sup>57</sup>; this identification enables Kant to set up a connection between the sceptical method and the dialectic. For the critical Kant, as is known, dialectic is only the “logic of illusion” (*Logik des Scheins*); the term had already been used in this sense towards the mid-1770s (*Refl.* 4676 [1773–1775], XVII, p. 657<sup>5</sup>).

The adoption of the term ‘dialectic’ in this specific sense is accompanied in Kant by a rejection of the traditional interpretation, then extremely widespread and previously accepted by Kant himself, of Aristotelian dialectic as *logica probabiliū*<sup>58</sup>; for the critical Kant, the logic or doctrine of probability (*Lehre der Wahrscheinlichkeit*) produces science, and thus belongs quite rightly to the analytic part of general logic<sup>59</sup>; on the contrary, dialectic does not produce science but is used to persuade and prevail in discussions; it is not so much a doctrine (*eine Lehre*) as a “sophistical art” (*eine sophistische Kunst*), a “practical capacity” (see *KrV*, A 61 and 63–64 B 85–86 and 88; *Logik Jäsche*, IX, pp. 16–17; *Refl.* 1629 [1780s], XVI, pp. 478–11 e 50<sup>10–11</sup>).

Kant attributes this concept of dialectic to the Ancients: to Aristotle, the Sceptics, the Sophists and Zeno of Elea. That Zeno was a dialectician was a widespread opinion based on the testimony of Aristotle; moreover, in the historiography of

<sup>55</sup>*Refl.* 4164 [1770], XVII, pp. 440<sup>16</sup>; “Scepticismus est vel dogmaticus vel criticus”.

<sup>56</sup>*Refl.* 4275 [1770–71], XVII, p. 492<sup>14</sup>; *Refl.* 4446 [c. 1772], XVII, p. 554<sup>1–2</sup>; cf. also *Logik Blomberg*, XXIV, pp. 210<sup>33</sup>–211<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>57</sup>Cf. *Refl.* 4275 [c. 1770–71], XVII, p. 492<sup>11–15</sup>; *Refl.* 4460 [c. 1772], XVII, p. 560; *Refl.* 4469 [1772–1775], XVII, p. 563; *Refl.* 5015 [1776–1778], XVIII, p. 614<sup>4–6</sup>; *Enzyklopädievorlesung* [c. 1780], XXIX, pp. 27<sup>39</sup>–28<sup>3</sup>; *Logik Blomberg*, XXIV, p. 212; *Logik Philippi*, XXIV, p. 438<sup>21–30</sup>.

<sup>58</sup>On the use in Kant of the term ‘dialectic’ meaning *logica probabiliū* see *Logik Herder*, XXIV, p. 510–11; for the history of the concept of ‘dialectic’ in German culture before Kant, we refer readers to the well-documented article by Tonelli, ‘Der historische Ursprung der kantischen Termini Analytik und Dialektik’, *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, VII (1962), pp. 120–139; see also Micheli, ‘La terminologia aristotelico-scolastica e il lessico kantiano’, in particular pp. 455–467, and Sgarbi, *La Kritik der reinen Vernunft nel contesto della tradizione logica aristotelica*, pp. 129–147.

<sup>59</sup>*KrV*, A 293 B 349; the distinction between *logica probabiliū* and “dialectic” refers to that between ‘[mathematical] probability’ (*Wahrscheinlichkeit, probabilitas*) and ‘plausibility’ (*Scheinbarkeit, scheinbares Argument* [*KrV*, A 502 B 530], *verisimilitudo*): cf. *Prol.*, IV, p. 369; *Logik Blomberg*, XXIV, pp. 144–146, 194–197; *Wiener Logik*, XXIV, p. 882; *Logik Dohna-Wundlacken* [1792], XXIV, pp. 472; *Verkündigung*, VIII, p. 420; *Logik Jäsche*, IX, pp. 81–82; *Fortschritte*, XX, p. 299; on this question see M. Capozzi, *Kant e la logica* (Naples, 2002), pp. 648–710, and S. Funaki, *Kants Unterscheidung zwischen Scheinbarkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit* (Frankfurt a.M., 2002).

philosophy of the time, he was accused of being one of the causes of ancient scepticism with his dialectic quibbling, as seemed to be proved by Sextus Empiricus' use of his well-known arguments. Kant accepts the opinion regarding Zeno as "subtle a dialectician" and as a cause of the Sophistic movement and Scepticism, even though he himself was neither a Sophist nor a Sceptic. However, as in the case of scepticism, in dialectic Kant also distinguishes between a positive use ("philosophical dialectic" as a critical method, which in this case coincides with the sceptical method, which was to become a "critique of dialectical illusion") and a negative use, the dominant meaning in Kant (dialectic as "eristic" or "sophistical art") (*Ref.* 4952 [1776–1778?], XVIII, p. 39). According to Kant, Zeno of Elea, Socrates, and Pyrrho were dialecticians of the first kind; the Sophists and the Academics belong to the second type. In this case, too, as for ancient scepticism, the distinction is made between dialectic as a simple critical method, a technique of asking, in which the interlocutor aims to unmask the presumption of knowledge, and dialectic employed positively as the "sophistical art of giving to ignorance, and indeed to intentional tricks, the appearance of truth", as a technique of replying, as an "organ", that is to say, "as an instrument that professes to extend and enlarge our knowledge".<sup>60</sup>

For Kant, the opposition between *scepticismus criticus* and *scepticismus dogmaticus*, which had already characterised ancient times, reappeared in the very same terms in the modern age: Hume is often cited by Kant as an example of purely methodical, critical scepticism; Voltaire, on the other hand, is presented as an example of sterile dogmatic scepticism. Voltaire does not know the sceptical method as a method of contrasting dogmatic cognitions according to appearance, "he expounds neither grounds *for* nor grounds *against* the matter. He enquires and tests nothing at all, but instead doubts without any proof that a cognition is not to be trusted. His grounds are thus nothing but illusory grounds, which can deceive

<sup>60</sup> *KrV*, A 61 B 86; *Logik Jäsche*, IX, p. 28: "In the beginning *dialectic* meant the art of the pure use of the understanding in regard to abstract concepts separated from all sensibility. Thus the many encomia of this art among the ancients. Subsequently these philosophers, who completely rejected the testimony of the senses, necessarily fell, given their claim, into many subtleties, and thus dialectic degenerated into the art of maintaining and of disputing any proposition. And so it became a mere exercise for the *sophists*, who wanted to engage in reasoning about everything, and who devoted themselves to giving illusion the veneer of truth and to making black white"; see similar passages in *Enzyklopädievorlesung*, XXIX, 1, 1, p. 31, and *Metaphysik L2* (Pölitz), XXVIII, 2, 1, pp. 536<sup>34</sup>–537<sup>4</sup>, and above all the well-known reference to the dialectic of the Ancients contained in the *Introduction to Transcendental Logic* (*KrV*, A 61 B 85–86), where the negative judgement prevails, to be compared with the praise of Zeno of Elea, "a subtle dialectician", reported in the seventh section of the 'Antithetic' (*KrV*, A 502–503 B 530–531); for Kant's interpretation of Zeno scholars usually refer to Plato's *Phaedrus* (261d); in reality, the sources used by Kant were, on one hand (for the theories he attributed to Zeno), Brucker, I, pp. 1169–70 (who in turn used the pseudo-Aristotelian *De Melisso, Xenophane et Gorgia* [977 a12–b20], known in the manuscript tradition as *De Xenophane, Zenone et Gorgia*), and on the other (for the method), Plato's *Parmenides* (135e–136b) and Proclus' commentary on the passage, quoted by Gassendi in his widely used history of logic, reproduced in its entirety in J.G. Darjes, *Via ad veritatem commoda auditoribus methodo demonstrata* (Jena, [1755], 1764<sup>2</sup>), pp. 195–196 (for a detailed examination of the question see Micheli, *Kant storico della filosofia*, pp. 118–143, and Id, 'Kant and Zeno of Elea: historical precedents of sceptical method', *Trans/Form/Ação* (Marília), 37, n. 3 (2014), pp. 57–64).



a simple man, to be sure, but never an acute and reflective, learned man. And precisely for this reason Voltaire is especially dangerous for the great horde and for the common man" (*Logik Blomberg*, XXIV, pp. 217–218).

There is no opposition between the "sceptical method" and "criticism", just as there is no opposition between "dogmatic procedure", which is demonstrative and scientific, and criticism. The opposition (and it is a radical opposition, in which each term is the negation of the other) is between "dogmatism" and "dogmatic scepticism", on the one hand, and dogmatic procedure (that is, demonstrative, which is proper to philosophy) and "problematic scepticism" or "sceptical method" on the other. If one maintains the twofold meaning (negative if raised to the level of doctrine, positive if kept on the level of method) of the terms 'dogmatic' and 'sceptic', then interpreting the succession of 'dogmatism', 'scepticism' and 'criticism' in terms of a continual progress and dialectic development risks being misleading, if one wishes to see in the second the negation of the first and in the third the negation of negation and the synthesis of the two previous determinations. For Kant, "criticism is the preparatory activity necessary for the advancement of metaphysics as a well-grounded science, which must necessarily be dogmatic, carried out systematically in accordance with the strictest requirement, hence according to scholastic rigour"; thus "criticism is not opposed to the *dogmatic procedure* of reason in its pure cognition as science [ . . . ]; rather, it is opposed only to dogmatism, that is, to the presumption of getting on solely with pure cognition from concepts [ . . . ] without an antecedent critique of its own capacity" (*KrV*, B XXXV–XXXVI; see above, note 50).

Similarly, the "sceptical method", which "is the essential method for transcendental philosophy", a method that "in all other fields of investigation [it] can be dispensed with, [but] it is not so in this field". It "aims at certainty"; it "is entirely different from scepticism, a principle of artful and scientific ignorance that undermines the foundations of all cognition, in order, if possible, to leave no reliability or certainty".<sup>61</sup> Between 'criticism', 'dogmatic procedure', and 'sceptical method' there is, therefore, a relationship of implication. Between 'dogmatism' and 'dogmatic scepticism' on the one hand, and 'criticism' on the other, there is however an absolute opposition of the type that exists between affirmation and negation; and thus there is no possibility of conceiving the third type, 'criticism', as the logical synthesis of the first two, or even as the necessary historical result of their succession in time. The opposition between 'dogmatism' and '[dogmatic] scepticism' for its part is only apparent, or 'dialectic', to use Kantian terminology, since the latter is nothing but a particular determination of the former: the identity of the condition that both presuppose reveals the uniqueness of the kind at whose extremes they are located.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *KrV*, A 423–425 B 450–452; on dogmatic (or Academic) doubt and sceptical doubt, see *Logik Blomberg*, XXIV, pp. 208–210; *Wiener Logik*, XXIV, pp. 885–886; *Logik Dohna-Wundlacken* [1792], XXIV, p. 745<sup>17</sup>–746<sup>4</sup>: "[ . . . ] the strictest sceptic, who simply is not critical any longer, can rightly be called a dogmatic sceptic although this appears to be contradictory. [ . . . ]"; *Logik Jäsche*, IX, p. 31, pp. 83–84.

At every stage in the history of thought, ‘dogmatism’ constantly had to face its own opposite, its mirror image, ‘dogmatic scepticism’, and vice versa, because they were both corroded by the same contradiction, the impossible condition that both presuppose and which, as long as one remains on the historical plane however, they are both incapable of detecting. In this case, too, the situation of stalemate produced on the plane of thought, which historiographical enquiry highlights, has only a negative meaning for Kant: dogmatism and scepticism, like the same image that is endlessly reflected in a mirror, are reproduced identically in their apparent opposition in the various historical periods, both ancient and modern. For Kant, as we have seen, the crisis in the field of philosophy, and its constant recurrence, does not in itself produce a solution to the problem; it is merely a negative state, which may allow for, and perhaps even favour, the production of a positive solution but independently from any historical condition. The conflicts on the historical plane make the solution possible, but they do not necessarily produce it: ‘criticism’ is not the necessary outcome of history, even if the negative conditions of the critical solution can be retraced throughout history, and not just now but always.

## 10.7 After the *Critique*: The Development of Historiographical Theories and Methodology

The framework of presentation, the fundamental theories, and the historiographical methodology remain basically unchanged in the critical Kant, and can be found with few modifications in all the works after 1781. During these years, Kant was principally concerned with expounding his system and defending it from attacks by the followers of the Leibnizian and Wolffian tradition, and then from the distorting interpretations of the early idealists.

### 10.7.1 The Platonic Tradition and Modern Rationalism

As far as the theory of the Greek origin of philosophy is concerned, in some works from the 1780s Kant also refers to the results in the historiography of philosophy of the late-Enlightenment, by scholars such as Meiners and Tiedemann, whose works he thus evidently knew. He cites them to counteract the Neoplatonic, mystical tendencies of some pre-Romantic circles,<sup>62</sup> such as the Münster circle, which

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<sup>62</sup>Kant refers explicitly to the *Geschichte des Ursprungs, Fortgangs und Verfalls der Wissenschaften in Griechenland und Rom* (Lemgo, 1781–1782) by Ch. Meiners, a work found in his personal library (cf. A. Warda, *Immanuel Kants Bücher*, Berlin, 1922, p. 5), in a letter to F.V.L. Plessing of 3rd February, 1784 (X, p. 363<sup>32</sup>), to confute with Meiners’ authority what his correspondent had maintained in the volume *Osiris und Sokrates* (Berlin, 1783) and then repeated in the letter with which he presented the volume to Kant (X, pp. 309–314), that is to say, the theory of the Egyptian origin of philosophy and of the sciences in general. Similar references



revived and disseminated old historiographical theories about the Oriental origin of philosophy, whose sapiential and oracular nature they underlined, going back to the interpretation of Plato in a Neoplatonic or Christian Augustinian way. This showed a sharp inversion of the tendency to distinguish Plato from Neoplatonism, already initiated by Brucker to a certain extent and then continued in the climate of the *Aufklärung* up to the Kantian Tennemann.<sup>63</sup> The historiography of philosophy of the pre-Romantic period, and then that of early Idealism, returned to the old theory of the pre-Greek origin of philosophy and to a Neoplatonic and mystic interpretation of Plato's philosophy. There are numerous examples of this inverse tendency, which on the historiographical plane also expressed a reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment. In the first place, we can cite the works by Frans Hemsterhuis, a Dutch philosopher who had been in Münster since 1779 and became a friend of Jacobi and Herder, which were somehow forerunners of this new trend. Hemsterhuis was a keen scholar of Plato's thought (in which he saw an anticipation of his own philosophy of the 'heart') and his works had a great influence on the German culture of the time.<sup>64</sup> In the 1780s, there were references to Plato in Friedrich

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can be found in *Metaphysik Volckmann*, XXVIII, p. 368<sup>37–38</sup>, and in *Wiener Logik*, XXIV, p. 801<sup>1–4</sup> (where, besides Meiners, there is also perhaps a reference to D. Tiedemann, *Griechenlands erste Philosophen*, Leipzig, 1780). Kant also knew and used Meiners' *Historia doctrinae de vero deo* (Lemgo, 1780) (cf. *Religionslehre Pöhlitz*, XXVIII, pp. 1122–1126). On the historians of the Göttingen school, see above, Chap. 9. On the exclusion of African and Oriental peoples from the history of philosophy in the historiography of the late Enlightenment (from Meiners onwards), including that of Kantian inspiration, cf. P.K.J. Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy* (Albany, 2013), pp. 11–29 and 69–95.

<sup>63</sup>On the interpretation of Plato provided by Tennemann's *System der Platonischen Philosophie*, (Leipzig and Jena, 1792–1795, 4 vols), which in some respects anticipates that of the Neokantians, let us refer readers to A. Levi, *Sulle interpretazioni immanentistiche della filosofia di Platone* (Turin, [1920]), pp. 1–5, and to the contribution by J.-L. Vieillard-Baron, 'Le Système de la philosophie platonicienne de Tennemann', *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, LXXVIII8 (1973), pp. 513–524 (repr. in Id., *Platon et interprétation de Platon à l'époque moderne*, pp. 79–90), who, however, given his declared predilection for the Neoplatonic and Idealist interpretation of Plato, tends to offer a somewhat reductive picture of the German historian's work.

<sup>64</sup>In many of the works by Frans Hemsterhuis one can find enthusiastic references, even if they are all historically vague and imprecise, to Socrates, who, according to Hemsterhuis, somehow anticipated his own philosophy of the heart: "My philosophy [...] is that of children, that of Socrates; it is the philosophy that we could find at the bottom of our own hearts, in our souls, if only we made the effort to look for it there" (*Sophyle, ou de la philosophie* [Paris, 1778], in F. Hemsterhuis *Œuvres philosophiques*, ed. L.P.S. Meyboom, Leuvarde, 1846–1850, I, p. 172). Hemsterhuis professed a sort of mystical pantheism of a Spinozist stamp: "By means of our reasoning we have arrived at a perfect, geometric conviction of the existence of a single creative God, who exists by essence and by his own force, and who consequently is infinite. Thus space, one, infinite space, is not a distinct being or essence; and it is consequently an attribute of God" (*Aristée, ou de la divinité* [Paris, 1779], in *Œuvres*, II, p. 65; in this literary fiction, the doctrine presented in the dialogue is imagined to have been professed by a pupil of Socrates). On the influence of Hemsterhuis on German thought, see J.E. Poritzky, *F. Hemsterhuis, seine Philosophie und ihr Einfluß auf die deutschen Romantiker* (Berlin, 1926); J.-L. Vieillard-Baron, 'Hemsterhuis, platonicien (1721–1790)', *Dix-Huitième Siècle*, 1975, pp. 149–146 (repr. in Id., *Platonisme et*

Heinrich Jacobi's *Briefe über die Lehre des Spinoza*,<sup>65</sup> and in the writings of Johann Friedrich Kleuker and Friedrich Victor Leberecht Plessing, who both linked Plato to the sapiential traditions in India, in Zoroaster's Persia and in ancient Egypt, and used late pagan Neoplatonism, and Proclus in particular, to read Plato.<sup>66</sup> Then at the beginning of the 1790s we have the mystical interpretations by Friedrich Leopold zu Stolberg and his friend, Johann Georg Schlosser, both active members of the Münster circle. Though now orientated in a Christian sense, following the Augustinian tradition, these interpretations were highly critical of Enlightenment rationalism on the philosophical plane and, on the political plane, of the democratic tendencies of the French Revolution.<sup>67</sup>

Kant was decidedly opposed to these new trends, in which he saw a repetition, albeit in a new guise, of old forms of *Schwärmerei* (visionary enthusiasm) in philosophy, which he regarded as the radical evil of reason. In the *Vorlesungen* of his last 15 years' teaching and in his polemical writings (such as his intervention, in October 1786, in the dispute over Spinozism with the article *Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren?* [What does it mean to orient oneself in thinking?], in the notes of the *Nachlaß* relating to this occasion,<sup>68</sup> where the cultural and spiritual

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*interprétation de Platon à l'époque moderne*, pp. 114–146); *Frans Hemsterhuis (1721–1790). Quellen, Philosophie und Rezeption*, M.F. Fresco, L. Geeraedts, and K. Hammacher eds. (Münster and Hamburg, 1995).

<sup>65</sup>In the *Briefe*, Jacobi offered a twofold, and at first sight contradictory, interpretation of Plato's philosophy, but which can actually be connected to the same Neo-Platonic blueprint: on the one hand, he acknowledged the Greek philosopher as a forerunner to Spinoza's absolute rationalism, "whose origin", he writes, "is very ancient, lost in the traditions from which Pythagoras, Plato, and other philosophers have already drawn"; on the other, a few pages later in the same *Brief*, he referred to Plato as found in *Letter VII* and glimpsed in the well-known passage (341c–d) a mystic outcome of Platonic philosophising, rooted in the separation between thought and discourse (F.H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* [1785], in *Werke*, K. Hammacher and W. Jaeschke eds., vol. I: *Schriften zum Spinozastreit*, K. Hammacher and I.-M. Piske eds. (Hamburg and Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1998), pp. 57 and 86). On Jacobi as a 'historian' of philosophy see T. Dini, *Il 'filo storico' della verità. La storia della filosofia secondo F.H. Jacobi* (Soveria Mannelli [Cz], 2005); Ciliberto, pp. 1033–1034.

<sup>66</sup>J.F. Kleuker (1749–1827) undertook the German translation of 27 Platonic dialogues, published in 6 volumes in Lemgo between 1778 and 1797; on the figure of Kleuker, cf. J.-L. Vieillard-Baron, 'La transmission du texte platonicien par le cercle de Münster: J.F. Kleuker', *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, LXXXVI (1976), pp. 39–61 (repr. in Id., *Platonisme et interprétation de Platon à l'époque moderne*, pp. 91–113). On Plessing see Schneider, pp. 228–231 and 238–239.

<sup>67</sup>Schlosser authored the translation into German of Plato's *Letters: Plato's Briefe nebst einer historischen Einleitung und Anmerkungen* (Königsberg, 1795; a first edition had appeared in a review of Giessen in 1793); the introduction discussed the political theme and was decidedly critical of the French Revolution. Friedrich Leopold, Graf zu Stolberg-Stolberg, translated some of Plato's dialogues: *Auserlesene Gespräche des Platon* (Königsberg, 1796–1797) [*Phaedrus, Symposium, Ion, Theages, Gorgias, Alcibiades I, Alcibiades II, Apology, Phaedo*]. On Schlosser and Stolberg and their conflict with Kant see below, note 81.

<sup>68</sup>We refer in particular to *Refl. 6050–6052*, XVIII, pp. 434–439, attributed by Adickes to the period 1780–1789.

crisis of the German Enlightenment was being announced, and then 10 years later, in *Von einem vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie* [On a recently prominent tone of superiority in philosophy], aimed not only against at the “Neoplatonic” philosophers of intuition and feeling quoted above, but also, it seems, against Fichte himself and his immediate position of an absolute rationalism), Kant defended the historiographical and speculative convictions he had always held. Philosophy was born in Greece: science arises with the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible, and with it the fundamental problem of all speculative philosophy, that of determining the conditions of possibility of scientific knowledge.

Kant’s judgement on Plato did not change, either, but merely became more precise. For Kant, Plato’s fundamental problem in the field of theoretical philosophy was the definition of the concept of science: “before him [Plato] there undoubtedly hovered, albeit obscurely, the question that has only lately achieved clear expression: How are synthetic propositions possible *a priori*?”. For Plato, geometry and arithmetic were examples of cognitions that could not have an empirical, but only an *a priori*, origin. Kant’s solution to the problem, which had already been Plato’s, is well-known: “there are indeed *intuitions a priori*, but not of the human understanding, since (under the name of space and time) they are actually *sensuous*”. Hence, it is not only that “all objects of sense are perceived by us merely as appearances”, as the Eleatics and Plato had already admitted, but “even their forms, which we are able to determine *a priori* in mathematics, are not those of things-in-themselves, but only (subjective) forms of our sensibility, which are therefore valid for all objects of possible experience, but not a step beyond that”. Since Plato, on the other hand, regarded all *a priori* cognition as cognition of the things in themselves, he must have found himself obliged to establish as the foundation of mathematical cognitions (the sole *a priori* cognitions we are given) a pure intuition of things in themselves, thus not of sensibility but of the understanding, thereby identifying the objects of mathematical knowledge, geometrical figures and numbers, with the archetypes (that is with the exemplary causes) of the things in themselves.<sup>69</sup>

In the German philosopher’s interpretation, both for Kant and for Plato mathematics is a paradigm of the scientific, but for Plato mathematics is a science of things in themselves which provides an example of the possibility for man to gain an intellectual intuition of the essential principles of things. For Kant, on the contrary, through mathematics we acquire an *a priori* cognition of objects, as

<sup>69</sup>*Von einem vornehmen Ton*, VIII, pp. 391–393; see also *Refl.* 6050, XVIII, pp. 434<sup>10–27</sup> and 437<sup>1–10</sup>; *Refl.* 6051, XVIII, p. 438<sup>3–9</sup>; *Metaphysik Volckmann*, XXVIII, 1, pp. 370–372. On the misunderstanding (or amphiboly) into which Plato is supposed to have fallen in his attempt to provide an explanation for a problem which was of the greatest importance, namely, that of the *a priori* nature of mathematical cognition, mistaking intuition given *a priori* for pure concept, besides the texts quoted above in note 34, see also: *KrV*, A 315 B 371 note; *KU*, § 62, V, pp. 363–364; *Fortschritte*, XX, p. 324 and p. 335. On the analogy of this misunderstanding in Plato and Leibniz, see *Refl.* 4851 [1776–78], XVIII, p. 9<sup>3–5</sup>: “Plato took all *a priori* cognition to be intellectual. Leibniz, too, and thus they did not recognize the sensible in space and time. Leibniz also explains it as intellectual but confused”; see also *KrV*, A 268–289 B 324–347.

intellectual activity determines the formal conditions of sensibility, providing an objective realisation to pure intellectual syntheses, without which we would have only empty concepts, “but only as far as their form is concerned, as appearances”. Mathematics is for Kant, as it had been for Plato in Kant’s interpretation, a pure, not an empirical, science, an *a priori* cognition of objects. But these objects for Kant are not the principles of the things in themselves, as they are for Pythagoras, Plato, and the ancient and modern Platonic tradition, but simply the forms of the objects of sense, pure forms of objects of a possible experience, *a priori* anticipations of the synthesis of the empirical manifold (*KrV*, § 22, B 147; *KrV*, A 157; see also *Refl.* 6050, XVIII, p. 437<sup>1–10</sup>).

The Platonic theory of recollection is also interpreted by Kant as a hypothesis formulated by Plato in order to explain the possibility, for a finite human mind, of intellectual intuitions constituting the foundation of the *a priori* cognitions of mathematics: “since with our understanding, as a faculty of cognition *through concepts*, we are unable to extend our *a priori* knowledge beyond our concept (though this does actually happen in mathematics), Plato was obliged to assume that we men possess *a priori intuitions*, which would, however, have their first *origin* not in our understanding (for the latter is not a faculty of intuition, but only a discursive or thinking faculty), but rather in one that was simultaneously the ultimate ground of all things, i.e., the divine understanding”. In order to explain the possibility for man’s discursive, finite mind to have intellectual intuition, Plato, recalling the mystery doctrines concerning the nature of the human soul, must have hypothesised a form of the soul’s participation in the knowledge of the objects of the original creative intuition of the divine understanding, the mathematical structures contained as archetypes, that is, as the essential and eternal principles and as the generative causes of all things, in God’s mind.<sup>70</sup> “Could Plato have guessed” the critical solution to the problem of the objectivity of knowledge, “he would not then have looked for pure intuition (which he needed to make synthetic *a priori* knowledge intelligible to himself) in the divine understanding and its archetypes of all things, as independent objects; or thereby have put the torch to visionary enthusiasm [*Schwärmerei*]” (*Von einem vornehmen Ton*, VIII, pp. 391–392 note).

For Kant, if in Plato’s theoretical philosophy the problem concerning the definition of the concept of science is clearly distinguished from the proposed solution – that is to say, the twofold acceptance of an intellectual intuition and an original communion of the human soul with God – it is then possible to account for the twofold, contradictory direction in which Platonism was to display its historical effectiveness. Posing himself, albeit obscurely, the question of how synthetic propositions are possible *a priori*, Plato is assumed, in Kant’s interpretation, to

<sup>70</sup> *Von einem vornehmen Ton*, VIII, p. 391<sup>11–29</sup>, on Plato, and pp. 392–393, on Pythagoras, the “wonder of numbers” and the fantastic cosmology of the Ancients; cf. also *Refl.* 6050, XVIII, pp. 434<sup>27</sup>–435<sup>4</sup>; *Refl.* 6051, XVIII, p. 437<sup>20–27</sup>; on the derivation of the theory of reminiscence from Oriental mystery doctrines on the nature of the soul, cf. *Enzyklopädievorlesung*, XXIX, 1, 1, p. 15; *Das Ende aller Dinge*, VIII, p. 331, note.

have engaged with the pivotal problem of theoretical philosophy of all times. This problem was then to find its definitive solution with critical philosophy after passing through the contrast that, according to Kant's interpretative framework presented above, opposed Plato to Aristotle in Antiquity and Leibniz to Locke in the modern age. However, according to Kant's interpretation, Plato must also rightly be considered "the father of all visionary enthusiasm [*Schwärmerei*] in philosophy" (*Von einem vornehmen Ton*, VIII, p. 398<sup>12–16</sup>), since he took mathematical cognition for intellectual cognition, and, through the theory of recollection, linked the solution to the problem concerning the definition of the concept of science to mystery doctrines concerning the origin of the soul. In other words, for Kant, philosophy received from Plato the seed from which it grew, but also the germ of the malady from which it might have died.

The term *Schwärmerei*, which had a theological origin but which for over a century had become part of philosophical terminology, indicates in Kant the rejection of reason as mediation, intuitionism, and mysticism in philosophy, and the overturning of the procedure of healthy philosophical reason.<sup>71</sup> However, even if Plato must undoubtedly be regarded as the origin of all kinds of *Schwärmerei* in philosophy, for Kant this occurs "through no fault of his own". It is true that Plato accepted the possibility of intellectual intuition and, in order to account for the participation of intellectual intuition in man's discursive intellect, supposed its original communion with God. However, he did so only hypothetically, in order to "explain", by proceeding backwards (*rückwärts*), analytically, the possibility of a synthetic *a priori* knowledge given in mathematics, not to extend, by proceeding forwards (*vorwärts*) and synthetically, the field of our *a priori* knowledge.<sup>72</sup> The door to *Schwärmerei* was definitively opened when philosophers, "contrary to Plato's intention", felt entitled to proceed synthetically and believed they could obtain, through deductions from above, with a synthetic procedure, all finite things

<sup>71</sup>On the meaning and use of the term *Schwärmerei* in the theological and philosophical debate (from Luther to Leibniz, and the later German Enlightenment) see W. Schröder, 'Schwärmerei', in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter et al. (Basel, 1971–2007), vol. VIII, cols. 1478–1483; see also E.W. Gritsch, 'Luther und die Schwärmer: verworfene Anfechtung?', *Luther. Zeitschrift der Luther-Gesellschaft*, XLVII (1976), pp. 105–120; *Die Aufklärung und die Schwärmer*, ed. N. Hinske, in *Aufklärung*, III/1 (1988). On its meaning in Kant, see also G.S.A. Mellin, *Encyclopädisches Wörterbuch der kritischen Philosophie* (Jena and Leipzig, 1802), vol. V, pp. 242–250; R. Eisler, *Kant Lexikon* (Berlin, 1930), p. 485; A. Philonenko, 'Introduction' to: *Kant, Qu'est-ce que s'orienter dans la pensée* (Paris 1971), pp. 36–39; B. Allouche-Pourcel, *Kant et la Schwärmerei. Histoire d'une fascination* (Paris, 2010).

<sup>72</sup>*Von einem vornehmen Ton*, VIII, p. 398<sup>12–16</sup>: "Plato the academic, therefore, though through no fault of his own (for he used his intellectual intuitions only backwards, to explain the possibility of a synthetic knowledge *a priori*, not forwards, to extend it through those Ideas that were legible in the divine understanding) became the father of all visionary enthusiasm [*Schwärmerei*] by way of philosophy". On the hypothetical, not yet *schwärmerisch*, nature of Plato's doctrine of ideas, see also *Logik* Blomberg, XXIV, p. 222<sup>28–31</sup>, *Refl. 6050*, XVIII, p. 435<sup>4–6</sup>, and *Refl. 4862* [1776–82], XVIII, p. 13; Kant hints in *KrV*, A 314 B 371 note, at the possibility "of a milder interpretation" of Plato's speculative philosophy and of his conception of mathematics.

from their origin, which they believed in turn to be the object of an immediate apprehension (of the understanding or the feeling), thereby completely forgetting the hypothetical context within which Plato had presented his doctrine of ideas. It was only then that the procedure of healthy reason was overturned and the intuitive, axiomatic method of mathematics was extended to philosophy. For Kant, the roots of *Schwärmerei* in philosophy are found in the confusion between idea of reason and intuition, between the necessary hypothesis of reason and the act of the metaphysical intellection of the principle. This path of confusing idea of reason with intuition was followed first by ancient Neoplatonism and then, in the modern age, by dogmatic rationalism, from Descartes onwards.

For Kant, there is a profound speculative affinity between the ancient Neoplatonists' idea of the necessary emanation of all things from the One, and the ontological proof of the tradition of modern rationalism from Descartes to Mendelssohn. In both cases, philosophy is constructed synthetically, through deduction from a single principle, grasped immediately by means of a pure act of intellection. The method of philosophy is the same as that of mathematics, axiomatic and deductive, and the inevitable outcome, in both cases, is the impossibility of transcendence.<sup>73</sup> As Kant had read in Brucker, Neoplatonism had conceived the world of ideas as the content of the mind of the One: consequently, the link that joins finite things to their archetypal causes, and ultimately to God himself, could only be conceived, in that context, as a necessary link of "inherence in one subject", rather than as dependence on a cause or a ground. The same is true, according to Kant, for the various formulations of the ontological proof in modern dogmatic rationalism. The most abstract, general concept, "thinghood as such" (*Dingheit überhaupt*) – that which is identical in each being, the being that is defined solely through opposition to the not-being, the not being a nothing<sup>74</sup> – is first transformed into a thing ("realised"),

<sup>73</sup>On the derivation from Platonism through different stages of Neoplatonism first, and then in the modern period, of intuitionism in Malebranche and immanentism in Spinoza, see in particular *Refl.* 6050, XVIII, pp. 435<sup>6</sup>–436<sup>20</sup>; on the speculative link between Platonism and the modern philosophies of Descartes, Malebranche and Spinoza, see *Refl.* 6051, XVIII, pp. 437<sup>27</sup>–438<sup>2</sup>, and p. 438<sup>17–25</sup>; on the relationship of similarity, if not direct historical dependence, between the *Emanationssystem* or *Ableitungssystem* of the Oriental and the Pythagorean-Eleatic-Platonic philosophical traditions and their "metaphysical sublimation" in Spinoza's system, see *Das Ende aller Dinge*, VIII, pp. 335<sup>19</sup>–336<sup>2</sup>, and *Metaphysik K2* [early 1790?], XXVIII, pp. 794–795; on the ontological (or Cartesian) proof of the existence of God as the "path towards Spinozism", see *Metaphysik K2*, XXVIII, p. 786<sup>10–11</sup>.

<sup>74</sup>*Fortschritte*, XX, p. 301<sup>28–33</sup>: "Reason, in metaphysics, seeks to create for itself a concept of the origin of all things, the primal being (*ens originarium*) and its inner constitution, and begins subjectively from the primal concept (*conceptus originarius*) of thinghood as such [*Dingheit überhaupt*] (*realitas*), i.e., of that whose concept intrinsically represents a being, rather than a nonbeing [...]. The concept of God as the totality of the real (*Dingheit überhaupt*), as the opposite of nothing, could be found in Spinoza, who, in his *Short Treatise*, after defining God as "a being of whom all or infinite attributes are predicated, of which attributes every one is infinitely perfect in its kind", explained in a footnote: "the reason is this, since *Nothing* can have no attributes, the *All* must have all attributes; and just as *Nothing* has no attribute because it is *Nothing*, so that which is *Something* has attributes because it is *Something*. Hence, the more it is *Something*, the



then it is conceived as a separate being (“hypostatized”), and finally it is thought of as a person (“personified”). For Kant, an incorrect inference is carried out here because a logical function of reason, the idea of the sum-total of all possibilities, the logical condition of the complete determination of a concept, is objectified, since in order to cognize a thing completely, one has to cognize everything possible in order to refer it either affirmatively or negatively to the thing, without the concept of complete determination thereby ceasing to be a simple idea of reason that prescribes the rule for its behaviour to the understanding.

However, for Kant, the same result that the metaphysics of modern rationalism mistakenly believes it has attained is contradictory in itself: the *ens realissimum*, the metaphysical God of the Cartesian tradition, on the one hand, is conceived as the original and highest being (*ens originarium*, *ens summum*), as a reality separate from experience. On the other hand, it is regarded as the essence common to all things, as the being of all beings, that which “contains the wherewithal for the creation of all other possible things, as the marble quarry does for statues of infinite diversity, which are all of them possible only through limitation (the separation of a certain part of the whole from the rest, and hence solely through negation)”. In this case, too, the link that connects finite things to their principle can only be thought of in terms of reciprocal inherence; finite things are nothing but “simple limitations” of the absolute; rigorously speaking, as Kant notes, they are not even anything truly real; and the absolute, the One, the God of Descartes’ proof, is for its part nothing but “the all of realities” (*Allinbegriff der Realitäten*).<sup>75</sup> Kant’s conclusion,

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more attributes it must have and consequently God, being the most perfect, and all that is Anything, he must also have infinite, perfect and all attributes” (Spinoza, *Complete Works*, ed. M.L. Morgan, Indianapolis, 2002, p. 40).

<sup>75</sup> *Fortschritte*, XX, pp. 301<sup>28</sup>–302<sup>35</sup>; *Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren*, VIII, pp. 137–138 note; *Refl.* 6050, XVIII, p. 436<sup>4–9</sup>; *Refl.* 6051, XVIII, p. 438<sup>17–25</sup>; *Refl.* 6052, XVIII, pp. 438–439; *Refl.* 6404 [1790–95], XVIII, p. 706; cf. also *Über eine Entdeckung*, VIII, p. 224 note. In the various formulations of the ontological proof of God’s existence, the same logical error highlighted in the pages on the *Transcendental Ideal* occurs (*KrV*, A 571–583 B 599–611), that is to say, a logical function of reason is hypostatized, or also, as Kant expresses it in the work of 1786 concerning Descartes’ proof of the existence of God, a need (*Bedürfnis*) of reason is confused with an act of the intellection (*Einsicht*) of the *ens realissimum* (VIII, p. 138 note; cf. also *Refl.* 6051, XVIII, p. 438<sup>8–15</sup>). The idea of the totality of every reality, which is to be found solely in reason and is the simple rule for the experimental use of the understanding, “we dialectically transform [...] into the collective unity of a whole of experience; and from this whole of appearance we think up an individual thing containing in itself all empirical reality”; such a thing is then surreptitiously exchanged “with the concept of a thing that stands at the summit of the possibility of all things, providing the real conditions for their thoroughgoing determination” (*KrV*, A 582–583 B 610–611). This argument, which rests on a logical error (“through a transcendental subreption [...] the ascribing of objective reality to an idea that serves merely as a rule”, *KrV*, A 509 B537), leads to conceiving God as the highest degree of the same essence common to all beings (God as *Wesen aller Wesen*, the being of all beings, as *ens entium*), and the relationship between finite things and their principle, consequently, in terms of reciprocal “inherence”, not of dependence on a cause. Kant identifies two possible ways of conceiving this relationship, to which there correspond two forms of pantheistic immanentism on the historical plane: in the first, “all manifoldness of things is only so many different ways of limiting the concept of the highest reality, which is their common

frequently repeated after the polemic on pantheism, is as follows: “Spinozism is the true conclusion of dogmatic metaphysics” (*Refl.* 6050, XVIII, p. 436<sup>8-9</sup> [see also p. 435<sup>21-22</sup>]; *Refl.* 6052, XVIII, p. 438<sup>17-25</sup>; *Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren*, VIII, p. 143 note). If intuition and idea of reason, *esse* and *concupi*, are confused, there is nothing left but Spinoza and his doctrine of the identity of God and nature: “Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God” (Spinoza, *Ethica*, I, prop. xv).

Kant’s basic historiographical theories remained unchanged, therefore, in the last 20 years of his activity: they were simply rendered more precise and specific, in the new cultural and spiritual, Romantic and pre-Idealist context of Germany at the end of the century. Even his historiographical methodology remained the same. Indeed, as it should by now be clear, Kant developed a historiographical discourse that is not concerned so much with being informative but rather with being explicitly and programmatically demonstrative. As we have seen, he proceeds by deliberately stressing the one-sidedness of philosophical systems with the aim of revealing the “dialectical”, that is, merely apparent, nature of their contrast. The opposing doctrines following one another, both in ancient times and in the modern age, all conceal an identical condition, which they all presuppose: the inadmissible condition constituting the common root of their mistake, which can only be overcome by Criticism.

### 10.7.2 Mysticism, Rationalism, Spinozism

We have already mentioned the fundamental speculative affinity that Kant believes he can detect, against all appearances, between Neoplatonic mysticism and the dogmatic rationalism of the Cartesian tradition, and the method he follows to prove this affinity. However, we can offer some further examples of this. The historiographical reasoning of the critical Kant always develops according to the framework described above. At the request of the Berlin *Aufklärer*, he took a position in the debate on Spinozism, and made an accusation of *Schwärmerei* against both Jacobi – that is to say, the position of those who deny that “reason deserves the right to speak *first* in matters concerning supersensible objects such as the

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substratum, just as all figures are possible only as different ways of limiting infinite space” (*KrV*, A 578–579 B 606–607); in the second, “the highest reality would ground the possibility of all things as a *ground* and not as a *sum total*; and the manifoldness of the former rests not on the limitation of the original being itself, but on its complete consequences” (*KrV*, A 579 B 607). In any case, we have two forms, the former “cruder” (*roher*), the second more refined, of radical, pantheistic immanentism; on the correspondence between the two hypotheses, defined in purely logical terms in the first *Critique*, and the two historical forms of pantheism (God as *Aggregat*, God as *Urgrund*; emanatist metaphysics, deductionist metaphysics), see of the many texts *Metaphysik K2*, XXVIII, pp. 794–795; *KU*, § 80, p. 421, and § 85, pp. 439–440; *Religionslehre Pöhlitz* [early 1780s], XXVIII, pp. 1092–1093; *Natürliche Theologie Volckmann* [1783–1784], XXVIII, pp. 1193–1194; *Refl.* 3907 [1771–1778?], XVI, p. 337<sup>15-18</sup>; *Refl.* 6019 [1790–1795], XVIII, p. 425<sup>25-27</sup>; *Refl.* 6119 [1780s?], XVIII, p. 461; *Das Ende aller Dinge*, VIII, pp. 335–336.



existence of God and the future world” (*Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren*, VIII, p. 143<sup>7–10</sup>) – and the Mendelssohn of the *Morgenstunden* – that is to say, those who, by “arguing dogmatically with pure reason in the field of the supersensible”, end up identifying philosophy, albeit unintentionally, with the immediate position of absolute rationalism. Historically, this latter was the position held by Spinoza, but according to Kant it had in practice been implicit in all modern rationalism, from Descartes to Wolff, and in the very *Popularphilosophie* of the Berlin *Aufklärer*. For Jacobi, “every avenue of demonstration ends up in fatalism”, that is to say, in Spinozism. In order to save transcendence, it is necessary to renounce philosophy and to take refuge in the immediacy of faith (*Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, in *Werke*, I, p. 123). Kant’s criticism of Jacobi’s position is radical: if philosophy truly demonstrates the impossibility of the object of religious belief, it will not be possible to adhere to such an object; if it is true that “the Spinozist concept of God is the only one in agreement with all the principles of reason”, then it will not be possible to admit in an other way a concept of God that does not accord with this. If the contradiction between philosophy and practical faith is real, as Jacobi claimed in his *Briefe über die Lehre des Spinoza*, it will not be possible to transform it into an apparent contradiction by means of the pure and simple negation of reason. Far from showing that the contradiction between reason and faith is merely apparent, Jacobi’s “somersault” actually amounts to a refusal to think (*Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren*, VIII, pp. 143–144).

Despite its less polemical tone, Kant’s criticism of Mendelssohn is equally radical. Mendelssohn also shows that his concept of reason and philosophy is similar to Spinoza’s. For Kant, the root of Mendelssohn’s implicit Spinozism is found, for the reasons we broadly discussed above, in his acceptance of the (originally Cartesian) ontological proof of the existence of God<sup>76</sup> and its presupposition, namely, the definition of substance provided by Descartes in the *Principia* and recalled by Spinoza in his *Ethics*.<sup>77</sup> In his *Morgenstunden*, Mendelssohn presented

<sup>76</sup>Cf. in particular *Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren*, VIII, pp. 137–138 note: “[...] Mendelssohn probably did not think about the fact that *arguing dogmatically* with pure reason in the field of the supersensible is the direct path to philosophical enthusiasm [*Schwärmerei*] [...]”.

<sup>77</sup>Spinoza’s metaphysics of immanence can already be seen, according to Kant, in the definition of substance given in *Ethica* (part I, def. III), with reference to which Kant observes: “The definition of Spinoza, that that, the idea of which does not need something else is identical to that that only the [*ens*] *realissimum* is substance, therefore there is only the necessary being [*Wesen*], to which everything else inheres” (*Refl.* 6405 [1790–1795? 1772–1773?], XVIII, p. 706). Spinoza’s definition of ‘substance’ derives from that provided by Descartes in his *Principia philosophiae* (part I, § 51), and for Kant, in their definition of ‘substance’, Descartes and Spinoza confused the subject of the proposition, which indicates something that does not belong to anything else (as opposed to the predicate, which indicates something that belongs to something else), with that which is independent of something else, in the sense that it does not need anything else, that is to say, it exists only in virtue of itself; or also that they confused ‘that which is not conceived of by means of something else’ with ‘that which is not caused by means of something else’, interpreting the dependence of the predicate on the subject in terms of the dependence of the conditioned on the condition or the consequence on the premise. In a series of notes on §§ 191–204 of Baumgarten’s

the ontological proof in a modified form, summing up in an exemplary fashion, to Kant's mind, the whole tradition of dogmatic rationalism. If, after having identified 'true' philosophy with Spinoza's system, Jacobi contradictorily thought he could escape the mesh of Spinozistic rationalism through a leap into faith, for his part Mendelssohn held, equally vainly for Kant, that he could save himself from ending up in Spinozism by appealing to "common sense" (*Gemeinsinn*), "healthy reason" (*gesunde Vernunft*), and "plain understanding" (*schlichter Menschenverstand*).<sup>78</sup>

In Kant's eyes, both contenders in the dispute on pantheism – apart from the apparent opposition between the former's blind fideism and the latter's Enlightenment rationalism, which was critical of all positive religions – showed that they shared the same presupposition, which was the same as Spinoza's: reason as a faculty of intuition, and philosophy as an axiomatic deductive system. For Kant, Jacobi was quite right to pronounce, against Mendelssohn and the Berlin Aufklärer, that "Leibnizian Wolffian philosophy is no less fatalistic than Spinozist philosophy and leads the persistent researcher back to the principles of the latter".<sup>79</sup> However, Jacobi also showed that he shared the same concept of philosophy and reason as his rival and the Cartesian tradition when he acknowledged that there is no alternative, either, to the use that had been made of reason in the tradition of Cartesian and post-Cartesian rationalism.<sup>80</sup> For Kant, one can find the same contradiction in both speculative positions; their opposition is, therefore, 'dialectic', that is to say, merely apparent. Yet both Jacobi and Mendelssohn are incapable of noticing it because the root of their reciprocal opposition remains hidden to them, that is to say, the identical condition that they both presuppose, and the reason for the merely 'dialectic' nature of this opposition, namely the unsustainability of this very condition.

Another example of demonstrative historiographical argumentation, developed along the same lines, can be found in *Von einem vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie* of 1796, a work that we have already cited. In this brief essay, which appeared in the May issue of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, Kant criticizes, as we have said, both the modern "Neoplatonists", namely, the philosophers of feeling close to the Münster

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*Metaphysica*, which refer to the concepts of 'substance' and 'accident', Kant observes: "Quod non existit, nisi ut rationatum alterius, est dependens; quod non existit, nisi ut praedicatum alterius, est accidens. Quod existit, etiamsi non sit rationatum alterius, est independens; quod existit, etiamsi non sit praedicatum alterius, est substantia" (*Refl.* 4776 [1775–78], XVII, p. 724), and he adds: "Hos conceptus [sc. 'independens' with 'substantia', resp. 'dependens' with 'accidens'] sibi confundendo peccarunt Carthesius et Spinoza" (*Refl.* 4777 [1775–1778], XVII, p. 724); see also *Über eine Entdeckung*, VIII, p. 24 note.

<sup>78</sup>Was heißt: *Sich im Denken orientieren*, VIII, p. 133; Kant is referring respectively to the *Morgenstunden* and to the work *An die Freunde Lessings*: see M. Mendelssohn, *Schriften zur Philosophie, Aesthetik und Apologetik*, ed. von M. Bratsch (Leipzig, 1880), vol. I, pp. 298–460 and 465–498.

<sup>79</sup>Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, in *Werke*, I, p. 123; and to support his theory, in a note that appears in the third edition of the *Briefe*, Jacobi refers readers to Kant, *KpV*, V, pp. 94<sup>22</sup>–102<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>80</sup>Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, in *Werke*, I, p. 123: "Every avenue of demonstration ends up in fatalism".

circle, and those who (very probably Fichte with his work of 1794)<sup>81</sup> regarded the axiomatic and deductive procedures of mathematics as a model for philosophy. In doing so they maintained, against Kant, the possibility of intellectual intuition for man, and the need (as Reinhold had already suggested) to reduce the principles of transcendental philosophy to a single principle, thus overcoming its dualism. For Kant, there is no real difference between someone who thinks philosophy only requires us to “hearken and attend to the oracle within” and consists in “supernatural information” and “mystical illumination”, and someone who conceives it as the immediate position of absolute rationalism. In both cases, one presumes to have immediate access to the supersensible object and to be able to directly intuit the ultimate principle of all things. For the former, the modern “Neoplatonists”, it is a kind of mystic intuition that cannot be communicated by means of language, such as that which Plato hints at in *Letter VII*,<sup>82</sup> which separates ‘thought’ and ‘discourse’; a Plato whose authenticity Kant does not acknowledge and whom he does “not wish to confuse [*vermengen*] with the other”, the Plato he knows and who posed the problem concerning the definition of the concept of science. For the latter, that is to say, the early Idealists, it is the case of positive apprehension, by means of intellectual intuition, of everything in the principle, and of the deduction of everything from this, synthetically, according to a procedure similar to that used in geometry.

For Kant, this is again a ‘dialectical’ kind of opposition, that is to say, a merely apparent one. There is a mystique of the silence of reason and there is also a mystique of rationality. The confusion between mathematics and philosophy, even if only on a methodological plane, inevitably leads to the various forms of *Schwärmerei* in philosophy, whether it leads to the “mystique” of numbers and to the fantastic cosmology of the Ancients and of the modern ‘Neoplatonists’, or paves the way for the presumption of being able to deduce experience from the

<sup>81</sup>In the article, the only direct quotations are taken from the works of Graf zu Stolberg and Schlosser, although there are indirect references to Jacobi (VIII, p. 398<sup>1–11</sup> and p. 401<sup>1–4</sup>) and to Fichte (VIII, p. 401<sup>21</sup>); the argument developed by Kant, in general, has a double purpose: to attack both “the appeal to philosophize by means of feeling” of the “more recent German philosophy” and those who believe it is possible to grasp the supersensible by means of the understanding as a faculty of intuition. On Kant’s polemic with J. G. Schlosser and F.L. zu Stolberg (and probably, as we have said, also with Jacobi and Fichte) cf. J. Kreienbrink, ‘Johann Georg Schlosser Streit mit Kant’, in *Festschrift für Detlev W. Schumann zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. A.R. Schmitt (München, 1970), pp. 246–255; R. Bubner, ‘Platon – der Vater aller Schwärmerei. Zu Kants Aufsatz *Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie*’, in *Antike Themen und ihre moderne Verwandlung*, ed. R. Bubner (Frankfurt a.M., 1992), pp. 80–93; O.F. Summerell, ‘Perspektiven der Schwärmerei um 1800’, in *Platonismus und Idealismus*, ed. B. Mojsisch et al. (Munich and Leipzig, 2003), esp. pp. 157–164; Dini, *Il filo storico della verità: la storia della filosofia secondo F.H. Jacobi*, in particular pp. 235–256; R. Ferber, ‘Platon und Kant’, in *Argumenta in Dialogos Platonis*, Part 1: *Platoninterpretation und ihre Hermeneutik von der Antike bis zum Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts*, ed. A. Neschke (Basel, 2010), pp. 371–390.

<sup>82</sup>Plato, *Ep. VII*, 341c–d; in several places in the article, Kant contests the authenticity of the *Letters* (see *Von einem vornehmen Ton*, VIII, pp. 398<sup>17–18</sup>, 399<sup>24</sup> and 406<sup>4</sup>). On Kant’s interpretation of the passage from Plato, cf. J. Stenzel, ‘Der Begriff der Erleuchtung bei Plato’, in Id., *Kleine Schriften zur griechischen Philosophie*, ed. B. Stenzel, (Darmstadt, 1956), pp. 154–155.

principle. In both cases, one is removed from intersubjective control, inevitably passing into the irrational vision of a superior intuition (*vornehme Anschauung*). Despite the apparent rigour provided by the imitation of the mathematical method, the rationalist's axiomatic deductive procedure is for Kant in no way less "mystic" and *schwärmerisch* than the philosopher of feeling's hearkening the oracle, while reason remains silent. Kant replies to the philosopher of feeling, and to the "mystic" of rationality, in the article of 1796, where he sings the praises of Aristotle, "an exceedingly prosaic philosopher". Kant quite openly declares that he does not share Aristotle's conclusions, but he appreciates his method, which has retained its utility (*Brauchbarkeit*). For Kant, as for Aristotle, "philosophy is work"; this means, first of all, a problem shared with others, not a personal possession, and the "metaphysician" (*Metaphysiker*) is "a dismemberer (*Zergliederer*) of all *a priori* knowledge into its elements" (*Von einem vornehmen Ton*, VIII, pp. 393<sup>30</sup>–394<sup>4</sup> and 406 note; see also *Refl.* 6050, XVIII, p. 435<sup>22–24</sup>). Kant expresses here his appreciation of Aristotle's philosophy, but only because he believes he can discern in Aristotle's analytic procedure, and only in this, the elements of the method of healthy philosophical reason, which for Kant is mediation, and moves by upward attempts (*von unten hinauf*), and not downwards (*von oben herab*) by deduction (see *Von einem vornehmen Ton*, VIII, p. 390<sup>30–34</sup>). Healthy philosophical reason is a critical exercise that is carried out when there is no presumption of an absolute, exhaustive knowledge and the soul is not conceived as the place where one can find a truth that cannot be translated into words.

## 10.8 Concluding Considerations

Here, as in all the other cases cited above, the historiographical procedure claims to be demonstrative: it is Kant's intention that historiographical argumentation should provide a further confirmation of the validity of the critical perspective. Indeed, when Kant is concerned with the history of philosophy, or even when he only provides historiographical examples, his aim is simply to demonstrate the validity of criticism by means of a historiographical argument rather than a theoretical one. Philosophy and the historiography of philosophy end up having a common basis, since Kant believes that the truth of criticism can, and indeed must be proved not only on the theoretical level but also on the historical one. For him, the "history of pure reason" provides the historical proof of that which the critique of reason demonstrates from a theoretical point of view; hence the two arguments run parallel.

Kant's criticism claims to be a response to a crisis that is both speculative and historical and to generate a "revolution" that from the plane of thought will also show its effects on the plane of history. In this, Kant feels the effects of, and gives voice to, that which has been defined as the 'eschatological state of mind' of German culture in the last decades of the eighteenth century. From this point of view, criticism prepares the way for the subsequent historiography of philosophy of Idealism: not only do we find from the point of view of the contents – in

the historical references in Kant's writings – numerous theories, distinctions, and judgements that later became part of the philosophical doxography of Idealism, and more generally in that of the nineteenth century; Kant also endorses, as far as the theory of historiography is concerned, the theory of the parallel between theoretical reason and interpretative reason. Moreover, not only does historiographical, like theoretical argumentation, have a demonstrative character, but the logical structure of the argumentation is also the same. In the theory of a parallel between theoretical and interpretative procedure, that is to say, between philosophy and hermeneutics, we find a forerunner to Schelling's and Hegel's historicism. But this analogy, which undoubtedly exists and whose relevance is also clear, cannot be taken any further. In Kant, unlike in Hegel, the logical structure of the theoretical-historiographical argumentation is simply critical. It is certainly true that history prepares and paves the way for the positive solution, but only negatively, that is to say, it does not produce it necessarily. For Kant, the historical development of thought, like the development of human history more generally, does not obey any necessary law; historical progress, along its general lines, can be interpreted but not explained. For this reason, it makes more sense to talk about a parallel between theoretical reason and interpretative reason in Kant rather than identity. The difference refers to the distinct, opposite meaning attributed to dialectic: in Kant, who in this depends more on the Aristotelian tradition than on the Platonic one, dialectic is, as is well known, the critique of dialectical illusion; a finite mind, like that of man, proceeds in argumentation through negation rather than through positive affirmations: this also holds in the field of historiography, where the negative, critical procedure prevails.

The similarities, but also the differences, between Kant's position and subsequent idealist historicism are further confirmed by the notes written by Kant between 1791 and 1795 in connection with the prize essay contest announced by the Berlin Academy on the theme of the development of metaphysics in Germany. These notes, which were not included in the collection edited by Reicke in 1804, were first published by Reicke only in 1895 and immediately attracted the attention of scholars, such as Adickes, who regarded them as the proof of Kant's late interest in the historiography of philosophy and as an anticipation of some of Hegel's theories.<sup>83</sup> In the first text (*Loses Blatt F3*), entitled *Von einer philosophirenden*

<sup>83</sup> R. Reicke, *Lose Blätter aus Kants Nachlass*, 2. Heft, (Königsberg, 1895), pp. 277–278 and 285–287 (now in the Academy Edition, XX, pp. 340–343). When Adickes, in *Kant-Studien*, reviewed the collection of Kant's unpublished writings edited by Reicke, he observed as far as the notes on the history of philosophy were concerned: "Some of the statements in the second quire are also of great interest [...] They show that Kant [...] also turned his attention to a subject that up to that moment – unfortunately! – had remained somewhat outside his scope of interest: the history of philosophy. He reflects here on the difference that there is between this and the other historical disciplines. The conclusions he reached anticipate, at least in part, the point of view of Hegel when he considers the development of philosophy in the system, and in parallel in history, as the self unfolding of absolute reason" (E. Adickes, 'Lose Blätter aus Kants Nachlass', *Kant-Studien*, I, 1897, p. 253). Several years later, Victor Delbos also seemed to see in these late notes of Kant's "an almost Hegelian conception of the history of philosophy, which Kant did not then develop in his works" (V. Delbos, 'Les conceptions de l'histoire de la philosophie', *Revue de Métaphysique*

*Geschichte der Philosophie* [Of a Philosophizing History of Philosophy], Kant starts his definition of the concept of the history of philosophy with the well-known Aristotelian distinction – which he learned from the tradition of *Schulphilosophie* – between “historical cognition” (*historische Erkenntnis*) in the sense of *cognitio ex datis*, and “rational cognition” (*rationale Erkenntnis*) in the sense of *cognitio ex principiis*.<sup>84</sup> Kant writes at the beginning of this brief note: “All historical cognition is empirical, and hence cognition of things as they are; not that they necessarily have to be that way. Rational cognition presents them according to their necessity” (*Loses Blatt F3*, XX, p. 340<sup>25–28</sup>; the distinction refers to the Aristotelian distinction between experience and art or science; see *Metaph.* I, 1, 981 a 25–30).

### 10.8.1 Historical Cognition and Rational Cognition

The distinction between “historical cognition” (‘*historisch*’ in the sense of ‘*faktisch*’, that is empirical, merely *ex datis*, not in the sense of ‘*geschichtlich*’) and “rational cognition” is not new in Kant. It frequently appears in his works<sup>85</sup> and is used particularly in the first *Critique*, in the chapter on *Architectonic*, to determine the concept of philosophy in its essential aspects. In his major work, Kant had maintained that every cognition, once abstracted from all content and considered solely in the manner in which it is acquired, is either ‘historical’ (*historisch*), that is *ex datis*, or ‘rational’, that is *ex principiis*. A cognition that is rational from the objective point of view, that is to say, from the point of view of its content, will merely be a historical cognition for the person having it (that is, subjectively), as long as that person has been given it from the outside (whether through immediate experience or narration, or through instruction). Hence there is the possibility of a subjectively merely ‘historical’ (*historisch*) cognition of philosophy, which objectively, that is, concerning its content, cannot but be a rational cognition: “[...] he who has properly *learned* a system of philosophy, such as the Wolffian system,

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*et de Morale*, XXIV, 1917, p. 140). On the analogies and differences between Kant and Hegel’s conception of the history of philosophy see Yovel, ‘Kant et l’histoire de la philosophie’, pp. 30–32; Philonenko, *La théorie kantienne de l’histoire*, pp. 214–215; Gueroult, I/2, pp. 388–390.

<sup>84</sup>On the distinction between *historische Erkenntnis* and *rationale Erkenntnis* in the tradition of the *Schulphilosophie*, cf., for example, Ch. Wolff, *Philosophia rationalis, sive logica* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1728), §§ 1–20 (on the distinction between *historica*, *philosophica* and *mathematica* cognition) and §§ 50–54 (on the historical cognition of philosophy) and G.F. Meier, *Auszug aus der Vernunftlehre* (Halle, 1752), §§ 17–18, 20–21 (Meier’s text is reported in XVI, pp. 93–94 and 100–101 with Kant’s annotations: *Refl.* 1724–1746, XVI, pp. 93–101; cf. also *Refl.* 2223–2237, XVI, pp. 275–280); on this topic in Meier see Pozzo, *Georg Friedrich Meiers Vernunftlehre*, pp. 195–197.

<sup>85</sup>Cf., for example, *Logik Jäsche*, IX, pp. 21–22; *Metaphysik v. Schön*, XXVIII, 1, p. 463<sup>5–9</sup>; *Logik Busolt* [1790], XXIV, pp. 613–614; *Metaphysik L2*, XXVIII, p. 531; *Logik Dohma* [1792], XXIV, pp. 697–698.

although he has in his head all the principles, explanations, and proofs together with the division of the entire theoretical edifice, and can count everything off on his fingers, still has nothing other than a complete *historical* cognition of Wolffian philosophy; he knows and judges only as much as has been given to him. If you dispute one of his definitions, he has no idea where to get another one. He has formed himself according to an alien reason, but the faculty of imitation is not that of generation, that is to say, the cognition did not come to him *from* reason, and although objectively it was certainly a rational cognition, subjectively it is still merely historical. He has grasped and preserved well, that is to say, he has learned, and is a plaster cast of a living human being. Rational cognitions that are objectively so [...] may also bear this name subjectively only if they have been drawn out of the universal sources of reason, from which critique, indeed even the rejection of what has been learned, can also arise, namely from principles" (*KrV*, A 836–837 B 864–865).

Furthermore, Kant believes that, among the objectively rational cognitions, only philosophy can give rise to a subjectively non-rational, merely historical (*historisch*) learning, "as is the case with most students and with all of those who never see beyond their school and remain students their all lives". In fact, for Kant, the other objectively rational cognition, mathematics – in being cognition "from the construction of concepts", that is, a cognition that is both intuitive and *a priori*, not simply acquired "from concepts", hence not a discursive cognition like philosophy – "however one has learned it", whether by oneself or through the teaching of others, "can still count subjectively as rational cognition". From this Kant draws the conclusion that "among the rational sciences (*a priori*) only mathematics can be learned, never philosophy (except *historically*); rather, as far as reason is concerned, we can at best only learn to *philosophize*" (*KrV*, A 837 B 865). This is a well-known conclusion and it can already, partly, be found in the pre-critical Kant: "in order to be able to learn philosophy there must already be a philosophy which actually exists". As one does exist, as far as geometry is concerned, with Euclid's *Elements*, "it must be possible to produce a book and say: 'Look, here is wisdom, here is knowledge on which you can rely. If you learn to understand and grasp it, if you take it as your foundation and built on it from now, you will be philosophers'" (*Nachricht*, II, p. 307). In the first *Critique*, the theory is developed more broadly: "[...] till then one cannot learn any philosophy; for where is it, who has possession of it, and by what can it be recognized? One can only learn to philosophize, that is, to exercise the talent of reason, in accordance with its general principles, on certain actually existing attempts at philosophy, always, however, reserving the right of reason to investigate, to confirm, or to reject them" (*KrV*, A 838 B 866). In the Jäsche *Logik*, Kant not only confirms the well-known motif "one cannot learn philosophy, just because it is not yet given"; he also adds that: "even granted that there were a *philosophy actually at hand*, no one who learned it would be able to say that he was a philosopher, for subjectively his cognition of it would always be *historical*" (*Logik Jäsche*, IX, p. 25<sup>30–37</sup>).

These arguments from the first *Critique*, which are also reiterated in other works and are on the whole somewhat traditional,<sup>86</sup> might, and may still suggest that Kant's evaluation of the historiography of philosophy was highly negative. The distinction between "rational cognition" and "historical cognition", the persistently proposed opposition between philosophizing and historically given philosophies, between "learning to philosophize" (*philosophieren lernen*) and "learning [historically] philosophy" (*Philosophie lernen*), could then, and still can, lead one to think that, all things considered, Kant regarded the study of the history of philosophy as philosophically irrelevant. In practice, even from the texts cited above, it seems that Kant always acknowledged that the study of the history of philosophy had a certain use: in the teaching of philosophy he makes room for "the history of man's opinions" (*Nachricht*, II, p. 310<sup>31–32</sup>); in the first *Critique*, in the passage cited above, Kant says that one learns to philosophize by applying one's own reason to all previous attempts at philosophizing (*vorhandene Versuche*: *KrV*, A 838 B 866); in the Jäsche *Logik* (IX, p. 26), "he who wants to learn to philosophize" is invited to regard "all systems of philosophy only as the *history of the use of reason* and as objects for the exercise of his philosophical talent". Nevertheless as we can see, there is nothing more than recognition of a certain didactic use of the history of philosophy, of its propaedeutic value in the teaching of philosophy at university, in accordance with the tradition inaugurated by Christian Thomasius, and then continued by Brucker and his followers (see above, pp. 475–506).

Kant has yet to clearly distinguish between 'historical' in the sense of '*faktisch*' (*empirisch, historisch*) and 'historical' in the sense of '*geschichtlich*'. In the note we started to examine (*Loses Blatt F3*), and in the other notes we shall look at (*Loses Blatt F5*), on the other hand, he clearly distinguishes between a mere "historical presentation of philosophy" (*historische Vorstellung der Philosophie*) and a "philosophical history of philosophy" (*philosophische Geschichte der Philosophie*), which is history (*Geschichte*) that is not 'historical' or empirical (*nicht historisch oder empirisch*) but rational, that is to say, *a priori* (*sondern rational, das ist a priori*). 'Historical' cognition (*historische Erkenntnis*) means empirical cognition, cognition of things as they actually are; "a historical presentation (*historische Vorstellung*) of philosophy recounts (*erzählt*) how philosophizing has been done up to that moment, and in what order"; yet such a presentation of philosophy is inadequate for its object because "philosophizing is a gradual development of human reason, and it cannot have set forth, or even have begun, upon the empirical path, and that by means of pure concepts"; it is necessary to admit a non-empirical cause, one at least not external to reason, of the genesis of philosophizing: "there must have been a (theoretical or practical) need of reason which obliged it to ascend from its judgments about things to the ground thereof, up to the first" (*Loses Blatt F3*, XX, p. 340<sup>28–35</sup>).

The theory endorsed by Kant seems to bear a distant analogy with what Aristotle claimed in the first book of *Metaphysics*, where it is stated that "the very facts", or

<sup>86</sup>See for example *Refl. 1632* [1752–1755/1756], pp. 52–53.



also “the truth itself”, must have paved the way for the early thinkers, forcing them to continue in their search for principles.<sup>87</sup> Even the example that follows somehow recalls Aristotle’s work: “initially through common reason, for example, from the world-bodies and their motion; but purposes were also encountered: and finally, since it was noticed that rational grounds can be sought concerning all things, a start was made with enumerating the concepts of reason (or those of the understanding) beforehand, and with analysing thinking in general without any objects. The former was done by Aristotle, the latter even earlier by the logicians” (*Loses Blatt F3*, XX, p. 341<sup>1–6</sup>; cf. Aristot. *Metaph.*, I, 2, 982 b 14–17). A philosophical history (*philosophische Geschichte*) of philosophy, for Kant, must look, initially at least, at the cause of philosophizing; the way philosophizing proceeds is not accidental; research begins by following the stimulus of a (theoretical or practical) “need of reason”, hence: “although it establishes facts of reason, it [the philosophical history of philosophy] does not borrow them from historical narrative, but draws them from the nature of human reason, as philosophical archaeology”; and we ask ourselves what problem, what nature of problem, pointed the way to philosophers and forced them to research: “what have the thinkers among men been able to reason out concerning the origin, the goal, and the end of things in the world? Was it the purposiveness in the world, or merely the chain of causes and effects, or was it the purpose of mankind from which they began?” (*Loses Blatt F3*, XX, p. 341<sup>7–15</sup>).

### 10.8.2 *A Priori* History of Philosophy

Some expressions in Kant’s writings might quite justifiably lead us to think that he conceived the “*philosophical* history of philosophy” as the outcome of a construction of a deductive kind, entirely independent of any reference whatsoever to empirical facts. In reality, for Kant, the “*philosophical* history of philosophy” is *a priori* not *simpliciter* but *secundum quid*,<sup>88</sup> that is to say, only to a certain extent. It is *a priori*, in other words, insofar as it deserves, unlike the mere ‘historical’ presentation of philosophy, to be called a science, which is what is meant when, in opposition to the ‘historical’, it is called the ‘philosophical’, or rational, history of philosophy. For Kant, as is well known, “insofar as there is to be reason in sciences, something in them must be cognized *a priori*” (*KrV*, B IX), but this concerns only the form of that cognition, not its matter, and in any case this does not mean that that cognition is not mixed with anything empirical, since not all *a priori* cognition is also pure (cf. for example *KrV*, B 2–3).

<sup>87</sup>Cf. Aristot. *Metaph.*, I, 3, 984 a 18–19 and 984 b 9–10. The first book of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* had been translated into German by G.G. Fülleborn in order to serve as a source for the history of ancient philosophy in his *Beyträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie*, no. 2 (1792), pp. 143–196, which Kant knew (see XX, p. 343<sup>3</sup>; on Fülleborn see below, Chap. 11, Introd.).

<sup>88</sup>The Scholastic distinction is used by Kant: “Some cognitions are *a priori secundum quid* [= *a priori* relative to something], others *simpliciter*, where there is nothing empirical” (*Refl.* 5668 [1780s], XVIII, p. 324).

Let us then recall the meaning of the term ‘historical’ (*historisch*) as it is used in Kant: as we have said, it means ‘*faktisch*’, ‘*empirisch*’, not ‘*geschichtlich*’; hence the distinction is between a ‘historical’, that is to say, empirical, presentation of philosophy (‘*historische*’ [*faktische, empirische*] *Vorstellung der Philosophie*), which simply informs us about the simple facts, pure multiplicity, the individual; and a history (*Geschichte*) of philosophy, which, on the contrary, is a science and also tells us, or claims to tell us, the reason, the cause, the unity and universal significance of what happens in the field of philosophy.

A confirmation of the proposed interpretation can be found in the second of Kant’s texts (*Loses Blatt F5*). The note presents three distinct questions in succession, for each of which Kant outlines an answer. The first question Kant asks himself is “whether a history of philosophy might be written mathematically (*mathematisch*)”, that is, in such a way as to show “how dogmatism must have arisen, and from it scepticism, and from both together criticism” (*Loses Blatt F5*, XX, p. 342<sup>5–7</sup>). The answer is negative, not only because of the fundamental difference between mathematical and philosophical method – a reason that is very well-known and constantly underlined by Kant in his writings – or because, if it is true that for Kant philosophy is a “system”, it is such according to the finalistic model of the living organism rather than according to the axiomatic deductive model of mathematics.<sup>89</sup> The objection Kant raises to the hypothesis he has formulated is, in this text, of a different kind: Kant asks “but how is it possible to bring a history into a system of reason, which requires the contingent to be derived, and partitioned, from a principle?” (*Loses Blatt F5*, XX, p. 342<sup>7–9</sup>). The reason for the rejection of the hypothesis of a “mathematically written” history of philosophy seems thus to consist in the impossibility of explaining, in this case, the contingent aspects of the empirical history, for which there would evidently be no room in an axiomatic deductive system.

The second question Kant asks himself is “whether a schema could be drawn up *a priori* for the history of philosophy, with which, from the extant information, the epochs and opinions of the philosophers so coincide, that it is as though they had had this very schema themselves before their eyes, and had progressed by way of it in knowledge of the subject”. Kant’s answer is affirmative: “Yes! If, that is, the idea of metaphysics inevitably presents itself to human reason, and the latter feels a need to develop it, though this science lies wholly prefigured in the soul, albeit only in embryo”.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup>On the difference between mathematics and philosophy, see in particular *KrV*, A 713–738 B 740–766; on the biological model of Kant’s concept of ‘system’, cf. G. Lehmann, ‘System und Geschichte in Kants Philosophie’, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Interpretation der Philosophie Kants* (Berlin, 1969), pp. 152–170.

<sup>90</sup>*Loses Blatt F5*, XX, p. 342<sup>20–28</sup>; a fairly similar theory can already be found in the pages of the *Architectonic* of the first *Critique*: “The systems seem to have been formed, like maggots, by a *generatio aequivoca* from the mere confluence of aggregated concepts, garbled at first but complete in time, although they all had their schema, as the original seed, in the mere self-development of reason, and on that account are not merely each articulated for themselves in accordance with an

The argument refers to the complex epistemological theme developed by Kant in the first *Critique*, in the 'Appendix' to the *Dialectic*, in particular in the second part, where he discusses the problem of the transcendental deduction of ideas. Some aspects of this theme are recalled in the chapter on *Architectonic* and then in the third *Critique*; in these pages, which are highly complex and extremely significant on the theoretical level, Kant defines positively, within his epistemological framework, the terms 'idea' and 'scheme' of an idea, and the "as if" (*als ob*) method. Both these terms and the method also appear in the text we are examining.<sup>91</sup> It is worth briefly recalling this aspect of Kant's epistemology. In the 'Appendix' to the *Dialectic*, he acknowledges that ideas of reason, if employed in a regulative sense, have a legitimate use and a positive function as hypotheses that guide the work of the intellect. The regulative use of ideas in relationship to the objects of experience turns out to be fruitful both for the systematic element that reason introduces into cognition and for the new empirical cognitions that the intellect acquires in being stimulated by rational hypotheses. The results of the use of the rules of reason with respect to experience prove that they do not have a merely subjective value, that is, they are not only logical rules, but also have some sort of transcendental value. Clearly, an actual transcendental deduction of the ideas is not possible, since experience can never fully realise the idea, and neither can the idea ever determine experience fully: the empirical use of reason can keep up with the ideas only "asymptotically, that is to say, merely by approximation, without ever reaching them"; however, the rules expressed by the ideas still have an "objective but indeterminate validity and serve as rules of possible experience"; furthermore, they can even be used very successfully, "as heuristic principles, in actually elaborating experience" (*KrV*, A 663 B 691). The regulative use of ideas is not turned into a constitutive use. However, it acquires an objective validity, albeit an indeterminate one, which in turn makes it possible to prove that even the contents thought in the ideas "are to have the least objective validity, even if it is only an indeterminate one, and are not to represent merely empty thought entities (*entia rationis ratiocinantis*)" (*KrV*, A 669 B 697).

As regards the objective, yet indeterminate, validity of the objects thought through ideas, Kant provides a sort of transcendental deduction: he distinguishes

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idea but are rather all in turn purposively united with each others as members of a whole in a system of human cognition, and allow an architectonic to all human knowledge, which – added Kant – at the present time, since so much material has already been collected or can be taken from the ruins of collapsed older edifices, would not merely be possible but would not even be very difficult" (*KrV*, A 835 B 863); organic unity, modelled on a living thing, therefore, is not only of the individual system, but the entire history of philosophy also constitutes an organic totality (cf. Yovel, 'Kant et l'histoire de la philosophie', in particular pp. 21–31).

<sup>91</sup> *KrV*, A 642–704 B 670–732, especially A 669–702 B 697–730. On this topic cf. Wundt, *Kant*, pp. 243–265; R. Zocher, 'Zu Kants transzendentaler Deduktion der Ideen der reinen Vernunft', *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, I (1958), pp. 43–58; G. Santinello, *Metafisica e critica in Kant* (Bologna, 1965), pp. 125–179; S. Marcucci, 'Aspetti epistemologici e teoretici della deduzione trascendentale delle idee in Kant', *Physis. Riv. di storia della scienza*, XXVII (1985), pp. 127–156.

between something that is given to reason as an “object absolutely” (*Gegenstand schlechthin*) and something that is given to reason as an “object in the idea” (*Gegenstand in der Idee*). In the first case, concepts are employed to determine and know the object; in the second case, “there is really only a schema for which no object is given, not even hypothetically, but which serves only to represent other objects to us, in accordance with their systematic unity, by means of the relation to this idea, hence to represent these objects indirectly”; the object thought in the idea does not correspond to the idea; of the object, which should correspond to the idea, one has only an ideal schema, which “serves only to secure the greatest systematic unity in the empirical use of our reason, in that one derives the object of experience, as it were, from the imagined object of this idea as its ground or cause. Then it is said, for example, that the things in the world must be considered *as if* (*als ob*) they had received their existence from a highest intelligence. In such a way, the idea is only a heuristic and not an ostensive concept; and it shows not how an object is constituted but how, under the guidance of that concept, we ought to *seek after* the constitution and connection of objects of experience in general” (*KrV*, A 670–671 B 698–699). The ideal schema, the imagined object of the idea, adapts the idea to a regulative use with respect to experience; the use of the ideal schema, employed empirically, generates positive effects on the cognition of the objects of experience; this fact ensures that the object thought in ideas, the ideal schema, is not a chimera but is possible to a certain degree, that is, it possesses some objective validity, however approximate and indeterminate.

In the note we are examining, Kant applies the general principles of his epistemology to the historiography of philosophy. To someone who simply looks at it, that is to say, to the “empirical” observer, the history of philosophy presents a variety of “epochs” and numerous “opinions”, but it does not enable this person to grasp an element conferring unity to the manifold, that is to say, a reason or cause of the empirical succession of events shown by the documents. In this way, we do not have a science but simply empirical knowledge. We shall have a knowledge of the history of philosophy that is somehow “scientific”, that is, a translation in terms of the *development* of the otherwise merely empirical succession, only if the historian abandons the attitude of the empirical observer and manages to acquire an ideal schema that will allow for a unitary interpretation of the empirical data. Kant is not suggesting that history must be deduced from a single rational principle: the deduction of what is empirical, contingent, and finite from a single principle is inconceivable for him. This is not only because, as we have seen, it would not be possible to account for the contingent aspects of empirical history, and the finite and empirical would end up being reduced to mere appearances, to purely ideal stages, in the sense of Hegel’s “ideality of the finite”, but also, and above all, because possessing a principle such as that which would be required for a constitutive use of the ideas would presuppose either an intellectual intuition of the unconditioned or the identification – as was to happen later with Idealism – of the unconditioned with reason itself. For Kant, as we have said, one cannot determine or cognize objects by means of the concepts of reason. The entities corresponding to ideas are given to reason only as “objects in the idea”; they are not admitted in themselves, but

their reality is only valid as that of a schema of the regulative principle of the systematic unity of all cognitions of nature; through these ideal entities, “we do not really extend our cognition beyond the objects of possible experience, but only extend the empirical unity of these objects through the systematic unity for which the idea gives us the schema; hence the idea holds not as a constitutive but merely as a regulative principle” (*KrV*, A 674 B 702).

Thus we will not have a merely empirical cognition of the varied and changing historical succession of philosophies, but a rational, systematic, in this sense “scientific” cognition, if we presuppose that philosophy has always already been there, but as a purely ideal object, as an ideal, noumenic schema designed on the basis of the idea. No objective value is immediately granted to this ideal entity; the latter serves only as a “heuristic principle”, as a “clue”, to representing the shapeless “aggregate” of empirical facts as a “system”. This theory had already been anticipated in the first *Critique*, in the chapter on *Architectonic*: philosophy, as the system of all philosophical cognitions, “must be taken objectively”, namely, as given, “if one understands by it the archetype for the assessment of all attempts to philosophize, which should serve to assess each subjective philosophy, the structure of which is often so manifold and variable. In this way, philosophy is a mere idea of a possible science, which is nowhere given *in concreto*, but which one seeks to approach in various ways” (*KrV*, A 838 B 866).

The object in the idea can be thought by means of categories, “with this difference, that the application of concepts of the understanding to the schema of reason is not likewise cognition of the object itself [ . . . ], but only a rule or principle of the systematic unity of all use of the understanding” (*KrV*, A 665 B 693). The “schema”, that is, philosophy as the object in the idea, as a purely ideal entity, enables the historian of philosophy to interpret the various, changing attempts to philosophize, that is, the multiplicity and empirical variety of historical data, *as if* all this were the result of an intentional production in the light of a principle of reason. With this, it is not that something is determined in historical experience; the rule is merely indicated on the basis of which the empirical use of the understanding may turn out to be in agreement with itself because it is connected, *as far as possible*, with the principle of general unity and is deduced from it. The ideal schema enables the historian to bring together the plane of the empirical, that is the accidental succession of philosophical systems in history, and the plane of rationality, while maintaining the distinction between the two planes and the heterogeneity of the empirical and the rational, thereby avoiding the risk that the plane of rationality should encompass empirical data. Their unity is purely hypothetical and conjectural, and one can conform to it only asymptotically. Philosophy, as the simple idea of a possible science, is schematized in the notion of “(theoretical or practical) need”, perceived lack, privation, or even of “original germ” or presence “in embryo”. The categories, in particular those of unity and causality, acquire a new meaning when applied to the schema; the unity is that of the living organism, the causality is the final one; philosophical knowledge and its historical development are organised according to a purpose.

### 10.8.3 The Historiography of Philosophy and Theoretical Philosophy

From the above, it is also clear that Kant distinguishes between the philosophy which the historian must have in advance (that is to say, philosophy as the simple idea of a possible science, as a mere ideal entity) and philosophy as a complete system, as an actual science and, albeit within the limitations in which it is conceded to man, fully accomplished. Kant was convinced, as we have repeatedly said, that he had determined a radical turning-point in the history of philosophy and had finally discovered “the only footpath, much overgrown by sensibility” (*KrV*, A 838 B 866). Moreover, he believed that “in a short time” (writing in 1781), even “before the end of the present century”, what many centuries had not been able to accomplish may now be achieved thanks to the *Critique*, “namely, to secure for human reason complete satisfaction in regard to that with which it has all along so eagerly occupied itself, though hitherto in vain” (*KrV*, A 855 B883; see also the texts cited above at note 8). Yet for Kant there is a distinction between the two disciplines, namely, between the history of philosophy and theoretical philosophy: the concept of philosophy which the historian must necessarily have is philosophy as an “object in the idea”, not the much more determined concept that is expressed in the idea of philosophy as a fully accomplished system.

The third question Kant asks himself in the work we are examining (*Loses Blatt F5*) is “whether the history of philosophy might itself be a part of philosophy, or would have to be part of the history of learning (*Gelehrsamkeit*) as such” (*Loses Blatt F5*, XX, p. 343<sup>3-4</sup>). His answer holds fast to the distinction between the two disciplines, albeit stressing their fundamental parallelism, which points to their common source: “whatever advances *philosophy* may have made, the history thereof is nevertheless distinct from philosophy itself, or the latter must be a mere ideal of a source, lying in human reason, of the philosophy of pure reason, whose development also has its rule in human nature” (*Loses Blatt F5*, XX, p. 343<sup>5-9</sup>). The distinction rests on the fact that, for Kant, philosophy cannot only be a mere ideal, that is, it cannot be reduced to the simple, various and changing attempts to philosophize, and neither can it, as a science, be the result of historical development alone: just as the history of philosophy cannot claim to be theoretical philosophy, so theoretical philosophy cannot entirely encompass the whole of history. However, there is a parallel between the two since they both presuppose, albeit only on an initial level, the same concept of philosophy: reason as a “need”, as a perceived lack, as a privation. The first root of philosophizing coincides with the very same elementary concept of philosophy which the historian must have in order to be able to read the shapeless “aggregate” of historical facts as a “system” and to interpret the mere succession of facts in time in terms of development, as is required by the nature of the object. The philosopher constructs his own philosophy, which rests teleologically on the idea of philosophy, starting from principles (*ex principiis*). For his part, the historian of philosophy has to reconstruct the gradual development of reason, which is purpose-oriented, starting from historical facts, that is *ex datis*. Thus, the history of philosophy – if it is not to be simply “the history of the opinions which have chanced to arise here or there, but the history of reason developing itself

from concepts” – cannot but presuppose in the historian the possession of a concept of philosophy, however still generic and indeterminate, a ‘schematic’ concept that is still the very same idea of philosophy, the original germ and principle that also moves, orientates, and regulates the historical process. Kant can thus claim that “a history of philosophy is of such a special kind, that nothing can be told therein of what has happened, without knowing beforehand what should have happened, and also what may happen”; he also asks “whether this [what may happen] has been investigated beforehand (*vorher untersucht*) or whether it has been reasoned out haphazardly” and expresses his preference for the former option (*Loses Blatt F5*, XX, p. 343<sup>10–25</sup>). Yet the hypothesis (or planned outline) of historical development, the necessary choice of a teleological hypothesis that serves as a criterion in order to select the historical facts and as a principle of judgment in order to regard the empirical manifold as a teleologically oriented “system”, does not eliminate for Kant the difference between the two planes, that of philosophy and that of the history of philosophy.<sup>92</sup> The historian must present the development of history in the course of time, but he must do so historically, that is to say, on the basis of facts, and the teleological hypothesis that serves as a guiding thread for the historian is, for the latter, a simple principle of the reflecting power of judgment.

Certainly, if it is true that Kant held fast to the distinction between philosophy and the history of philosophy, there still remains the fact that he also, with even greater emphasis, underlined their basic parallelism. The plurality of historical standpoints expresses, if it does not exhaust, the variety of possible systems from the point of view of reason; yet the more one underlines the theme of the parallel between philosophy and its history, and between the analysis, or subdivision (*Zergliederung*), of a concept and the survey of the various positions expressed in history, the more difficult it becomes to preserve the substance of the distinction between philosophy and the history of philosophy. They both have the nature of the developing reason as their common source; for the historian “philosophy has to be viewed here as a sort of rational genius (*Vernunftgenius*), from which we demand to know what it should have taught, and whether it has furnished this” (*Loses Blatt F5*, XX, p. 343<sup>18–20</sup>). All this seems to authorise us to conceive the project of deducing the history of philosophy from the ultimate, definitive philosophy, that is, from the critique of reason itself, and to dissolve any distinction between planes in parallel.

The developments towards Idealist historicisms also depend on an inner tension in Kant’s doctrine: Kant believes that, in the history of philosophy, only by starting from the result, that is to say, from critical philosophy, is it truly possible to determine the meaning of the historical process that leads up to that result (see, for example, XX, pp. 335<sup>10–11</sup>); the conclusions of critical philosophy are confirmed by the results of the history of philosophy; theoretical and historiographical argumentation proceeds in parallel with the aim of proving, both theoretically and historically, the truth of criticism, which Kant hopes will provide the solution to a crisis involving

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<sup>92</sup>Cf. the indications concerning historiographical method in *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte*, VIII, pp. 17–18.

both speculation and civilisation. Reinhold, and then the first Idealists, tried to reduce the principles of transcendental philosophy to a single principle, thereby overcoming the dualisms that were supposed to constitute its shortcoming; this led them to once again regard the intuitive and axiomatic procedure of mathematics as a model for philosophy. This was accompanied by an increasing tendency to stress the parallel between reason and history and to forget the distinction between the two levels, a distinction which for Kant was essential. These thinkers also developed the conviction that they could deduce the entire history of philosophy, even construct it *a priori*, regardless of the empirical data and of the chronology itself, from the nature of reason, as its projection in time.<sup>93</sup>

Yet these developments, although somehow originating from a tension internal to Kant's system, do not belong to Kant. We shall restrict ourselves here to making only two concluding remarks. We have already said that the conception of dialectic as a "critique of illusory appearance" (one might say with Aristotle "peirastic") does not enable Kant to conceive the historical development of philosophy in terms of dialectic development in the Hegelian sense. For Kant, the logical need to avoid contradiction cannot be identified in the historical need to overcome it. History prepares the positive solution only negatively but does not necessarily deliver it: between two contradictory opposites there is no given third, or a synthesis of the two, there is no 'negation of negation' to which a decisive task can be assigned. Secondly, Kant's theory of knowledge refers to a finite understanding, which synthesizes, but does not produce, the sensible givenness. The 'spirit' of Kantianism, not just its 'letter', is misrepresented by the absolutization of the understanding that posits both the form and the content of cognition. When Reinhold, and then Fichte, conceived the project of bringing the whole of philosophy back to a single principle, which constitutes the presupposition of the total deducibility of knowledge, they had already abandoned Kantianism, whose horizon is that of a finite understanding that does not create the content of its own knowledge.<sup>94</sup> The opposition to any form of absolutization of thought is an essential feature of criticism, and it expresses the distance separating Kant's critical Enlightenment from the early Romantic period. The limitation of cognition and the indeducibility of the datum are the two cornerstones of Kant's epistemology, and they concern every kind of cognition, even historical cognition, whether of philosophy or of history in general. For Kant, the rational component, which has to play a role if cognition is to be, at least to some degree, scientific, is simply to be applied to the empirical data in order to afford their transcription according to a purely hypothetical, conjectural, planned rational order, according to a procedure that is always analytical-regressive, never synthetic-deductive.

<sup>93</sup>On criticism as the principle for a pragmatic history of philosophy in Reinhold, cf. V. Verra, *Dopo Kant. Il criticismo nell'età preromantica* (Turin, 1957), pp. 1–31.

<sup>94</sup>On Kant's reactions to Reinhold's and Fichte's interpretations of criticism, cf. de Vleeschauwer, *La déduction*, III, pp. 491–551; on the indeducibility of datum, against Fichte, cf. *Letter to Tieftunk* (5th April, 1798), XII, p. 241<sup>13–30</sup>, *Erklärung* (7th August, 1799), XII, p. 370<sup>13–35</sup>, and *Opus postumum*, XXI, p. 207<sup>23–28</sup>.



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# Chapter 11

## Kantianism and the Historiography of Philosophy

Giuseppe Micheli, Giovanni Santinello, Bruno Bianco, and Mario Longo

### Introduction

Giuseppe Micheli

#### (a) *Criticism as the decisive philosophy and the history of philosophy*

Critical philosophy was presented to its contemporaries claiming to solve the eternal problems of philosophy. This conviction was soundly based on some of Kant's well-known texts in which he maintained that he had come to the discovery of the "only footpath, much overgrown by sensibility" (*KrV*, A 838 B 866), and that he believed that within a short time, "even before the end of the present century", it should be possible, thanks to Criticism, to reach the goal that had remained elusive for centuries, "namely, to bring human reason to full satisfaction in that which has always, but until now vainly, occupied its lust for knowledge" (*KrV*, A 856 B 884).

Kant attributed the decisiveness of critical philosophy to the fact that "reason has the sources of its cognition not in objects and their intuition [ . . . ], but in itself,

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and, if reason has presented the fundamental laws of its faculty and determinately (against all misinterpretation), nothing else remains that pure reason could cognize *a priori*, or even about which it could have cause to ask" (*Prol.*, Ak. IV, p. 366). The decisiveness and the systematic character of critical philosophy make it the only possible principle for the exhaustive interpretation of history and its meaning. One can already find a trace of the use of the critical standpoint as a criterion for the interpretation of the whole of the history of philosophy in Kant's texts, both in the *History of Pure Reason* and in the pages of the *Dialectic*, in particular in the contrasts expounded in the *Antinomy* in each of the three *Critiques*, where transcendental enquiry and historical survey are developed in parallel, and the critical perspective affords a view of a logical order in the chaos of systems (see above, pp. 698–699). Kant classifies the speculative positions that emerged in the course of history from a systematic point of view, with reference to the logical subdivision of the concept that lies at the root of the problem at issue. The one-sidedness and provisional nature of the philosophies of the past correspond to the indeterminate nature of the concept; the systematicity and definitiveness of critical philosophy is consistent with the clear, fully determined concept. Past philosophies are not products external to reason, lacking all connection to one another, but stages in a reason that is seeking itself in the course of history.

Starting from the knowledge that reason, through critical philosophy, has finally acquired of itself, past doctrines can be comprehended in a completely new way, precisely because they are the products of reason. What had earlier appeared to be merely a discord of mutually exclusive affirmations, now finds a coherent meaning within the systematic framework of critical philosophy, which is the harmonious and definitive solution to the problems that previous philosophies only partly and unilaterally solved. The historical products of thought are traced back to logically possible positions; history itself is transformed into a system. Kant would even reach the point of speaking of an *a priori* history of philosophy (in texts, however, which had no influence on his immediate followers since they did not become known until a century later): "A philosophical history of philosophy is itself possible, not historically or empirically, but rationally, i.e., *a priori*. For although it establishes facts of reason, it does not borrow them from historical narrative, but draws them from the nature of human reason, as philosophical archaeology" (Ak. XX, pp. 340–343; see above, pp. 754–757). His contemporaries, however, openly discussed the possibility of an *a priori* history of philosophy, developing the theory, which was in a certain sense already contained in Kantian Criticism, of a parallelism between the process of the reflection of philosophical reason which becomes aware of its own spontaneity and the immediate activity of reason as the spontaneous function of the soul.

(b) *The history of philosophy in Reinhold's Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*

The author who first, and perhaps foremost, saw this aspect of Kantian philosophy was Karl Leonhard Reinhold (1757, Vienna – 1823, Kiel). At first, from 1784 until the early months of 1786, he, like many others, was opposed to Criticism. But he discovered it properly in 1786 and immediately began to expound it in a

series of articles that he wrote in the form of letters and published from August, 1786, to September, 1787, in the *Teutscher Merkur*, one of the leading reviews of the German *Aufklärung*, which he edited in Weimar together with Christoph Wieland. Those first *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* were extraordinarily successful and greatly contributed to disseminating Kantianism in Germany. After being revised and augmented by other articles, also published in the *Teutscher Merkur*, they were then published as a book in Leipzig in 1790. This first volume was followed by a second one, also published in Leipzig, towards the end of 1792, which also contained articles that for the most part had appeared in the *Neuer Teutscher Merkur* from January, 1791, to June, 1792.<sup>1</sup> Although he was not yet a member of academic circles, young Reinhold approached Kant's texts following the interests and problems he shared with the readers of the *Teutscher Merkur* and he was able to present Kant's philosophy in close connection to questions of the time, insisting above all on the links it had with the fields of morals, religion and politics.

The perspective which Reinhold takes up in the *Briefe* is of a historical bent. The topic of the first letters was not so much Kant's philosophy as the idea of a radical crisis in the cultural and historical world: "The most striking and characteristic feature of the spirit of our age is a *shaking* of all previously known systems, theories and manners of representation, a shaking whose range and depth is unprecedented in the history of the human spirit" (*Briefe*, I, p. 12). The crisis is not restricted to the field of thought but extends to all the subjects influenced by thought, in particular ethics, religion, law and politics. Reinhold sees the solution to the crisis that is "shaking" his times in Kantian philosophy, which is "not only a new, universally valid metaphysics, that is true science [...], but also the loftiest point of view in all history, the fundamental and highest rule of taste, the principle of every philosophy of religion and the fundamental law of morals" (I, p. 108). Reinhold distinguishes "between progress towards science and progress in science. [...] The former is by its nature finite and must cease with the discovery and the acknowledgment of the ultimate and only true principles of science; the latter is by its nature infinite [...]. In the former there are philosophies, positive and negative dogmatic ones, empirical, rationalistic, sceptical ones – but there is no philosophy itself; there are all sorts of hypotheses [...], but there is no science [...]; in the latter there is a single philosophy without epithets (*eine einzige Philosophie ohne Beynamen*) but

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<sup>1</sup>K.L. Reinhold, *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* (Leipzig: Georg Joachim Göschen, 1790–1792, 2 vols). The publication of the *Briefe* in the *Teutscher Merkur* was broken off in September, 1787, when Reinhold was called to Jena; the eight letters that had thus far appeared in the journal were published in an unauthorised book in Mannheim in 1789 (another edition, entitled *Auswahl der besten Aufsätze über die Kantische Philosophie*, Frankfurt und Leipzig, 1790). On the editions of the *Briefe*, cf. A. Von Schönborn, *Karl Leonhard Reinhold. Eine annotierte Bibliographie* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1991), pp. 69–71, 72, 75–76, and 82–83. See the English translation of the eight letters published in the *Teutscher Merkur* (with the major additions in the 1790 edition) in K.L. Reinhold, *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, ed. K. Ameriks (Cambridge and New York, 2005).

which is proper, strict science. The period of transition from the former is the period of Kantian or critical philosophy”.<sup>2</sup>

Criticism is not *a* philosophy but *the* philosophy because it is not the knowledge either of inaccessible non-empirical contents, about which there can only be an indefinite series of opinions, or of conditioned, changeable phenomenological contents, but a reflection on unchangeable forms: “The original, universal laws of the power of representing, cognizing and knowing” (II, pp. 468–473; see also I, pp. 93–94). In discovering the sole possible principle of all the manifestations of the human spirit in the functions and dispositions of the spirit itself, compared to every earlier and future philosophy Criticism has reached a point of no return, beyond which it is impossible to go, since it fully satisfies the fundamental requirement of former philosophies and contains the proof of their inadequacy. Critical philosophy is the point of arrival of the historical process and, at the same time, the result from which we can start to determine the meaning of the historical process that produced it. Not only is the critical system the only possible basis for moral, legal and religious life, and the key to the solution to the crisis in civilisation, but it is also the only exhaustive criterion for interpreting the manifold forms that the spiritual life has assumed; in other words, “the results of critical philosophy are in harmony with the general results of the history of philosophy in general” (I, p. 269).

The theoretical demonstration of the truth of Criticism is followed by the exposition of the history of the reason’s self-knowledge, the reconstruction of which has been made possible only by starting from the result represented by critical philosophy. Reason is the only criterion for interpreting history, or, rather, what is rational in it. The history of philosophy, therefore, can be deduced from critical philosophy: “Through the analysis of a fundamental concept one can also account for the number of unilateral interpretations permitted by its indeterminacy, and hence for the diverse systems and sects that were thus made possible” (II, pp. 21–22). If none of the philosophies of the past presented itself with those characteristics of one-sidedness which derives from logically subdividing the concept, this is completely irrelevant from a historical point of view, in which a past philosophy acquires significance properly and solely as the unilateral expression of the truth of which critical philosophy is the adequate expression. A pragmatic history of philosophy is possible *a priori*: “It is indeed thanks to critical philosophy itself that it is possible to rediscover all the systems hitherto elaborated and present them in their most convincing forms, even by those who have never heard of them. In this way, one can also decide *a priori* how many fundamental systems may be *possible* and

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<sup>2</sup>*Briefe*, II, pp. 177–178; see also Reinhold, *Ueber das Fundament des philosophischen Wissens* (Jena: Mauke, 1791), pp. 9–12; on this topic, cf. Verra, *Dopo Kant. Il criticismo nell’età preromantica* (Turin, 1957), pp. 5–31; Guerout, I/2, pp. 390–393; K.J. Marx, *The Usefulness of the Kantian Philosophy. How K.L. Reinhold’s Commitment to Enlightenment Influenced His Reception of Kant* (Berlin, 2011), in particular pp. 117–179, 256–294.



point out that, before criticism, the human spirit exhausted all the ways of obtaining information about the grounds of things in themselves, so that *all* new systems that presuppose the cognizability or even just the representability of the thing in itself are merely combinations and modifications of the ancient ones”.<sup>3</sup> Much of Reinhold’s early production follows this line of methodology: he starts from the results of Kantian philosophy, connects them to the deepest common beliefs about God and morality and the fundamental needs of the time and reveals the capacity of the former to eliminate old, unsolved controversies of the philosophical world and to agree with what the greatest minds thought about the major problems of speculative philosophy.

As examples of how Reinhold creates the history of philosophy let us take, first, the result of the Kantian enquiry into the existence of God. People’s common response to the question of whether God exists has always been that He does; but this is not so for philosophical reason, where the question of proof is that which is at issue. Some schools argue for an affirmative answer, others for a negative one. Among those that affirm God’s existence, the “dogmatic theists” believe they have found the *ratio cognoscendi* for the existence of God within the field of reason, while the “supernaturalists” place it outside reason, in revelation. Among those who deny God’s existence, the “dogmatic sceptics” reject any basis for arguments concerning the existence of God and state that the problem is in itself unsolvable, while the “atheists” believe that the negation of the existence of God has objective foundations. Apart from these four standpoints, no others are possible as far as the demonstration of the existence of God is concerned. The conflicting sides cannot be reconciled, for the further reason that each half of each of the two general parties is allied with a half of the other party against the other half of its own party: the supernaturalists with the sceptics in stating that nothing can be decided about the existence of God through the use of reason, and the dogmatic theists with the atheists in claiming that reason has effectively resolved the problem. The assertion held by each school is unanimously rejected by the other three, while the opposite assertions win the consensus of three schools out of four: the problem can be solved (against the sceptics), but not by revelation (against the supernaturalists); a negative solution (against the atheists) is not possible, nor is a positive one that may be objectively grounded (against the theists). These principles are the same as those of critical philosophy, which thus find a confirmation in the history of philosophy: “in the discord that is so absolute concerning the rest, three parts against one were always in agreement with the fundamental theories Kant established as the results of his enquiry into the cognitive faculty and which are fully confirmed by the doctrine of

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<sup>3</sup>Aus *F.H. Jacobi’s Nachlaß. Ungedruckte Briefe von und an Jacobi und Andere. Nebst ungedruckten Gedichten von Goethe und Lenz*, ed. R. Zueppritz (Leipzig, 1869), vol. I, p. 137; cf. also Reinhold, ‘Ueber den Begriff der Geschichte der Philosophie’, *BGPh*, I/1 [1791], neue überarbeitete Auflage (Züllichau and Freystadt, 1796), p. 32.

the practical postulates he developed”; moreover, philosophical reason has always also been in agreement with common understanding; “all this, however, had not been understood before the Kantian *Critique*”.<sup>4</sup>

Reinhold produces several other historiographical outlines of this type, particularly for the history of the doctrines concerning the soul and immortality (I, pp. 288–311), for that of law (II, pp. 38–63 and 98–135), ethics, religion in its relationship to morals, and many more. The common feature of all these outlines consists in the twofold tendency to demonstrate historically the decisive nature of the fundamental doctrines of Criticism on the one hand, and to justify the positive aspects, although gradual and partial, of earlier historical phases on the other.

The most significant outline is perhaps the one provided in the *Grundlinien zur Geschichte der bisherigen Moralphilosophie überhaupt und insbesondere der stoischen und epikurischen*, published as the eleventh letter in the second volume of the *Briefe* (II, pp. 381–417; see also *Versuch*, pp. 76–117). For Reinhold, who feels it necessary at this point to introduce a clearer distinction in Kantian doctrine, the empirical (interested) impulse and the moral (that is, disinterested) impulse are both indispensable elements in the voluntary act, of which they constitute, respectively, the matter and the form: however, they are only conditions of the act of will, whose real substance is found in a person’s original faculty of self-determination, in which freedom consists (*Briefe*, II, pp. 381–385). According to Reinhold, the concept of morality which is suitably formulated in these distinctions is confirmed precisely because both the truth and the one-sidedness of Stoicism and Epicureanism, and of all the ancient and modern moral systems that are nothing but mere variations of them, can be deduced from it (II, p. 381). In misunderstanding the true nature of the concept of freedom, both Stoicism and Epicureanism rejected the faculty that the opposed school established as the exclusive grounds for morals: the Stoics rejected the sensible, egoistic impulse, the Epicureans practical reason, or the disinterested impulse. For the Stoics morality consisted in indifference to pleasure, while for the Epicureans virtue was nothing but mere interested prudence. The right notion of the highest good, in which both happiness and virtue must be combined harmoniously, escaped them both: one saw only happiness, and turned solely to sensibility; the other reduced everything to virtue and reason. The Stoic ended up by admitting only perfect duties (*vollkommene Pflichten*) and worshipped only

<sup>4</sup>ALZ, no. 231 (1788), cols 831–832; see also K.L. Reinhold, *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens* (Prague and Jena: Widtmann and Mauke, 1789 [1795?]), pp. 76–89 (English transl. of 1789 ed.: *Essay on a New Theory of the Human Capacity for Representation*, T. Mehigan and B. Empson eds., Berlin and New York, 2011); *Briefe*, I, pp. 130–135; cf. Marx, *The Usefulness of the Kantian Philosophie*, pp. 195–196. Reinhold’s outline was discussed in several German reviews, for example in the PhM, II (1790), pp. 436–459 (see also ALZ, no. 357, 1789, cols 418–419; GGZ, 100. St., 1789, pp. 883–884; AM, Bd. 1, 1. St., 1791, pp. 190–191; cf. *Die zeigenössischen Rezensionen der Elementarphilosophie K.L. Reinholds*, hrsg. v. F. Fabbianelli, Hildesheim, 2003), and even in English ones: see *The Monthly Magazine*, I (1796), pp. 265–266; cf. G. Micheli, ‘The Early Reception of Kant’s Thought in England’, in *Kant and His Influence*, G. MacDonald and T. McWalter eds. (Bristol, 1990), pp. 251–252, and M. Class, *Coleridge and Kantian Ideas in England 1796–1817* (London, 2012), pp. 29–31.

justice (*Gerechtigkeit*), whereas the Epicurean rejected perfect duties in favour of imperfect ones (*unvollkommene Pflichten*) and exalted love of the self (*Selbstliebe*) without bearing justice in mind. The Stoic ended up by reducing morality to a single virtue, consisting in the repression of all egoistic impulse: the Epicurean, on the contrary, denied himself the chance of a single unitary line of conduct because he was engaged in following the indefinite multiplicity of the precepts on which the search for pleasure in everyday life depends. On the one hand, there was a moral law which could not be applied in reality, on the other, the lack of any absoluteness in the moral law (II, pp. 387–405).

In practice, common sense (*der gemeine und gesunde Verstand*) corrected the extreme conclusions that philosophical reason could not fail to deduce from the erroneous outlook of the Stoics and Epicureans: the Stoic condemnation of all physical factors was tempered by the surreptitious insertion of concessions to sensibility among the pure duties of justice, and certain disinterested needs of the human spirit were maintained in Epicureanism in the guise of interest. The correction and integration of those extreme maxims was favoured by the development of culture in the classical world, so much so that in practice a custom very close to the true form of morality was attained (II, pp. 406–409). The crisis in the ancient world, which resulted in an undermining of the spiritual life, led to the resurgence of the defects of Stoicism and Epicureanism in “monasticism” (*Monachismus*) and “libertinism” (*Libertinismus*) (II, p. 411). After the classical age, “Stoicism fell back into *Cynicism*, from which the philosophical reason and common sense of Zeno had saved it, and in which even at the outset the seeds of the monastic spirit were hidden: later, these dispositions, fostered and increased by the corrupt metaphysics of the Neoplatonists and by the degenerate religiosity of the Christians, produced the mystic morality of the Fathers of the Church and the monks”. In the corrupt climate of Imperial Rome, Epicureanism in turn, going back to the “Cyrenaic theory of pleasure, from which it had been elevated by Epicurus’ common sense (*gesunder Verstand*)”, degenerated into the “libertinism of corrupt imperial Rome”. After the interruption imposed by the general poverty of the Middle Ages, “monastic Stoicism” and “Epicurean libertinism” were revived in “supernaturalism” (*Supernaturalismus*) and “naturalism” (*Naturalismus*), whose various forms Reinhold lists (II, pp. 413–417).

(c) *Discussions on the method of the historiography of philosophy*

The interpretation Reinhold proposed for critical philosophy (in the *Briefe*, in Book 1 of his *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens*, and in the two volumes of *Beyträge zur Berichtigung bisheriger Mißverständnisse der Philosophen*, published between 1790 and 1794) also had an immediate influence on professional historians of philosophy. Needless to say, the study of the history of philosophy had already undergone an important change as from the 1770s, particularly with Garve, Meiners and Tiedemann, who had introduced into the field of the history of philosophy developments that had taken place in critical-philological work in the decades after Brucker. However, the “weak point” in these historians of philosophy lay in the poverty of their speculative presuppositions, tacit

in some and more explicit in others, that is to say, the *Popularphilosophie* of the late Enlightenment (see above, pp. 515–548).

In the last decade of the century, Kantian philosophy gave rise to two different trends among historians of philosophy: on the one hand, Meiners and, above all, Tiedemann, who were still tied to the late-Enlightenment tradition, and, on the other, Buhle and Tennemann, who were influenced by the new philosophy. Historiography of a Kantian bent won the day, thanks also to the effect of the dissemination of Criticism and the consensus found in the most widely read journals, such as the authoritative Jena *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, which had been Kantian in its outlook from the outset. Kantianism was transmitted to the historians of philosophy in the last decade of the century mainly through Reinhold's popularizing work. Tennemann, who, in Jena, was initially anti-Kantian, discovered Kant towards the end of 1790 thanks to the first volume of Reinhold's *Briefe*, which he felt had enlightened his work as a historian of Platonism (see below, pp. 842–843).

The influence of Reinhold's interpretation of Kant on historians of philosophy is well illustrated by the events in the life of Georg Gustav Fülleborn (1769, Gross-Glogau – 1803, Breslau), a young philologist and valid scholar of ancient thought, attentive to questions of historiographical methodology. Fülleborn had studied philology in Halle from 1786 to 1789 under the guidance of Friedrich August Wolf, obtaining his doctorate with a dissertation on the pseudo-Aristotelian text *De Melisso, Xenophane, et Gorgia*; in those same years, without knowing anything about modern philosophy, he decided to attempt to study the first *Critique* (which had been recommended to him as “the best compendium of philosophy”), but obviously without much success. The *Briefe*, which at that very time were just beginning to appear in the *Teutscher Merkur*, seemed to throw some light on the matter for him: he was fascinated by “the facts taken from history, the parallels between ancient and modern philosophers that were so clear and beautiful”; obviously, in the *Briefe* Reinhold “presented only the results” of critical philosophy, while Fülleborn wanted some “illumination about the premises”; however, as far as the rest was concerned, Reinhold's “non-technical language”, “his references to other philosophers and his opinions on religion and morals” gave him a sense of the “narrowness of his earlier studies”. He thus looked forward to the publication of the *Versuch*, “which promised to be the key to the *Critique*”; here, too, he was enthusiastic about the historical part of the work, “the preface and the whole of Book One”, which reproduced articles that had mostly already appeared in Wieland's journal. However, when he tackled the constructive part of the essay, Books Two and Three, he found himself once again in difficulty, so he changed method. “I knew the philosophemes of the Ancients,” he writes, “so I dedicated myself to the theories of the Moderns, from Descartes to the works of more recent German philosophers”, and a horde of abstract, empty systems appeared before his eyes, “mere subdivisions of ideas mistaken for factual knowledge”, moreover totally disagreeing on contents and methods; yet, he immediately intuitively, “it should have been possible to obtain some whole from all their [modern philosophers'] assertions taken together, if only it had been possible to find a sure principle according to which we could evaluate and arrange philosophical discoveries”. Hence his illumination: “At this point, the

*Critique* became something quite different to me from what it had earlier been. I considered it a critique of systems, and placed the names of philosophers whose opinions could fall into such a list under the general expressions (dialectic of the understanding, antinomies of reason, etc.). The whole came to life and came into contact with the living. If what one immediately deduces from reading philosophers is true, [that] each of them saw the truth at least from one angle, then such a critique of systems is always also at the same time a critique of knowledge in general”.<sup>5</sup>

This is the same theory as Reinhold's: only the critique of reason allows us to find order in the chaos of systems, and history, in acquiring a systematic order, in its turn provides a confirmation of the truth of the critical system. Fülleborn's agreement with critical philosophy led him to elaborate a theory and a methodology of historiography which are stated very clearly in theoretical articles and in some essays on the history of ancient philosophy, published in the *Beyträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie*, 12 issues of which he published between 1791 and 1799, and which also contained some articles by Reinhold (see below, p. 845, footnote 47), Forberg and Carus, besides the reprint of Garve's methodological essays (see above, pp. 537–542).

The observations with which Fülleborn ends his essay on early Greek philosophy, published in the first issue of the *Beyträge*, are of particular interest, because they are not merely theoretical observations, but a presentation of the methodical rules that he has just applied. He wonders how it may be possible to reconstruct the vicissitudes of philosophy in those early times with the few available documents. The answer derives totally from Reinhold's premises: “The oldest philosophemes cannot but have arisen from the same source from which the opinions of later philosophers, and even of more recent ones, came, that is to say from the nature of the human representative faculty. The task of philosophy has been the same in all times: to seek the necessary foundations of the links that connect the things. [...] The nature of the human representative faculty, its forms and ways of operating have in all times been the same. [...] The laws of the understanding and the ideas of reason were expressed in the earliest speculations, as they have been in the most recent; [...] the difference lies in the fact that not everywhere have they been understood, or misunderstood, in the same way”. The consequences of possible misunderstandings can be indicated just as easily: “They are divided into two types, dogmatism and scepticism. The latter has only one principle, the chance nature of experience, and thus there can be only one type of it”. Dogmatism, on the contrary, may assume the diverse features of spiritualism and materialism, each of which, in its turn, according to particular modifications, contains diverse subspecies, such as theism, pantheism, and so on. Fülleborn thus concludes: “From all these considerations, it turns out: a) that we already have *a priori* a complete vision of the whole of all possible philosophies, hence of all the history of philosophy, and b) it is for this very reason that we may perhaps be satisfied with the most imperfect of data

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<sup>5</sup>G.G. Fülleborn, ‘Geschichte meines philosophischen Studiums’, BGPh, I/3 (1793), pp. 179–196 (especially pp. 187–188).

to interpret correctly the opinions of an ancient or modern philosopher [...]; c) that we do not need to keep with scrupulous precision to the sensible or abstract signs by which philosophers indicated a thought once we have agreed on the object of their doctrines and on their originating in the human representative faculty itself, and we have deduced from the data that in no case can another fundamental representation lie at their roots; d) that it is very easy to notice the role played by imagination in some philosophical dogmas and to separate what it added to them". These four points, Fülleborn concludes, even with the difficulties recalled above, "speak in favour of the possibility of a history of the most ancient philosophy; they both hardly restrict the historian to an arid narrative of certain facts and hardly permit him to proceed in a purely arbitrary fashion. When [he is dealing] with ancient or modern philosophemes, the historian has to resolve these philosophemes in the original universal forms of the human capacity for representation. Only in this way will it be possible for him to extract the philosophical content from all the statements and remove what does not belong to a history of philosophy".<sup>6</sup>

Similar considerations were expressed in 1791 by Karl Heinrich Heydenreich (1764, Stolpen – 1801, Burgwerben) as an appendix to the German translation of the history of modern philosophy by Appiano Buonafede.<sup>7</sup> For Heydenreich, too, if there is a philosophy, it cannot but be a science of man's faculties and of the forms, rules and principles of their operations; the Kantian system, "the first and last of its kind", contains the "science of human nature", in which philosophy, properly speaking, consists (*Originalideen*, I, pp. 5–6). The results of the Kantian revolution cannot but produce "a complete change in method in the treatment of the history of philosophy" and make "even the best works on this subject published so far" seem "nothing more than simple collections of material when compared to the history of philosophy drawn up according to critical principles". Heydenreich divides the historians of philosophy into three classes: on the lowest level he places those who restrict themselves to reporting the facts of the history of philosophy critically (*kritische Relatoren der Thatsachen*); on the next level are those who, with the laws of hermeneutics, are able to interpret finely (*scharfsinnige Hermeneutiker*); on the highest level there are the true historians of philosophy, whom he calls "*pragmatische Geschichtsschreiber der Philosophie*", capable of "showing, as far as it is possible, the unitary picture of the developments and revolutions in philosophy", and "how any system whatsoever, any opinion whatsoever of any philosopher whoever, must be the outcome of the nature of man's spiritual

<sup>6</sup>G.G. Fülleborn, 'Ueber die Geschichte der ältesten Griechischen Philosophie', BGPh, I/1 [1791], neue und überarbeitete Auflage (1796), pp. 54–57.

<sup>7</sup>K.H. Heydenreich, *Einige Ideen über die Revolution in der Philosophie, bewirkt durch Immanuel Kant, und besonders über den Einfluss derselben auf die Behandlung der Geschichte der Philosophie*, published as an appendix to the German translation of the history of modern philosophy by Appiano Buonafede (*Kritische Geschichte der Revolutionen der Philosophie in den drey letzten Jahrhunderten*, Leipzig: Weygand, 1791, vol. II, pp. 213–232; on Buonafede see above, Chap. 6). The essay was later reprinted with some modifications in *Originalideen über die interessantesten Gegenstände der Philosophie* (Leipzig: Baumgärtner, 1793), vol. I, pp. 1–36.

faculties” (pp. 26–29). This, the highest form of the history of philosophy, if it is possible, is only such on the basis of the principles of critical philosophy, which “indicates all the possible courses a thinker may take, follows them in all their meandering and deviations and shows the relationship they share and the end to which they aim. With the guidance of its light, the researcher sees links that inattentive eyes find totally unconnected and unrelated; where the latter discover only opposition and contrast, the former enjoys a surprisingly harmonious show” (p. 30).

However, examples of works of this type are rare and incomplete: among them, Heydenreich recalls some of Reinhold’s *Briefe* on Kantian philosophy.<sup>8</sup> In any case, for Heydenreich, who is more cautious than other Kantians, “the complete exposition of the precise causes of the formation of the science remains just an ideal”. This is not only due to the practical difficulties that such a task involves but also to causes of a conceptual nature. For Heydenreich there still remains a gap between the historical and the philosophical plane, otherwise one would have to speak of a historical conditioning of philosophy; but critical philosophy cannot be deduced from history, whose development does not contain sufficient (and strictly speaking not even necessary) conditions for the solution to the problem posed by philosophy. For some philosophers, he observes, “it is absolutely essential that precisely all the events and revolutions that we know should already have occurred before philosophy can attain its end. Yet the more I look at the ages in the history of philosophy, the more I become convinced that every claim is merely a boast that contradicts the historical data, and the proof of its truth is nowhere to be found. I do not understand why the arrival of a Kant could not have been possible before the appearance of a great number of philosophical miscarriages”. He concludes by saying: “An exposition of the entire process of the formation of philosophy, which exhibits all the facts in a necessary connection, cannot but be in many of its parts merely poetic and sophistic” (pp. 28–30).

Johann Christian August Grohmann (1769, Grosskorbetha – 1847, Dresden), who had translated Buonafede’s work, also pondered over these problems. In the essay *Ueber den Begriff der Geschichte der Philosophie*, published a few years later<sup>9</sup> and known for having been discussed and criticised by Tennemann (see below, pp. 846–847), Grohmann speaks of the history of philosophy as an orderly expo-

<sup>8</sup>“Wenige Freunde der kritischen Philosophie haben sich bis jetzt einer solchen Bearbeitung unterzogen. Als Muster stehen einige Reinholdische Abhandlungen in den Briefen über die Kantische Philosophie vor Augen” (*Originalideen*, p. 33).

<sup>9</sup>The essay was published in Wittenberg in 1797 and contained some critical observations on the theories that had been propounded in an article published anonymously by Tennemann in Niethammer’s *Philosophisches Journal* (II, 1795, pp. 325–326); Tennemann replied to Grohmann’s criticisms in the ‘Einleitung’ to the first volume of the *Geschichte* (p. IX); Grohmann revived his theories in the essay, which was actually a reprint, with some modifications, of an earlier text of his, ‘Was heißt: Geschichte der Philosophie?’, in *Neue Beyträge zur kritischen Philosophie und insbesondere zur Geschichte der Philosophie*, J.Ch.A. Grohmann and K.H.L. Pöhlitz eds., I (1798), pp. 1–78.

sition of philosophical systems, from which every contingent, empirical element and chronology or temporal succession of events are excluded (p. 65). Grohmann's presupposition is the same as that of Reinhold, Fülleborn and Heydenreich: critical philosophy is not *a* philosophy but *the* philosophy; it is not a partial, unilateral system but the system of all systems, which is why it can provide the historian with the key to interpretation which had not previously been available. "The future historian of philosophy – since there has been none so far – must be at a height that will allow him to embrace and dominate everything in a single glance; just as a landscape painter stands outside the landscape he depicts, so the historian must stand outside the field of philosophical systems so that all the lines, all the rays of light converge on him, and he can thus measure and scrutinise everything to the farthest horizon. This is the Gordian knot, which has not yet been untied, even though we have had the tools for untying it ever since the *Critique of Pure Reason* appeared" (p. 99). Chronological order is excluded because it is not able to produce the systematic order that for Grohmann is the essential characteristic of a history of philosophy, which is however history, since it presents a multiplicity, that is the various systems, but in it the multiplicity cannot be provided *a posteriori*, in the temporal succession of events, but only *a priori*, according to necessary links, which are perceived by reason. In reality, Grohmann was still working, more than it might seem, within the school tradition that distinguished between "historical cognition" (*historisch* in the sense of *faktisch*, that is empirical, merely *ex datis*, not in the sense of *geschichtlich*) and "rational cognition". The term 'history' can be applied to philosophy only by excluding those characteristics that are part and parcel of every history, that is, chronological succession and empirical causality. The history of philosophy, therefore, can only be something completely different: it is the system of all possible systems, that is, the system of philosophies cleansed, however, of all empirical and contingent elements and transformed into pure ideal types. Yet this is not enough: the systems must be stripped of their bias and one-sidedness and taken all together, in a view that embraces all of them in their intrinsic, reciprocal ties.

This conception of critical philosophy in relation to the history of philosophy was widely shared by people of learning. In June, 1789, in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* the reviewer of an essay by Reinhold (perhaps August Wilhelm Rehberg) observed how a hasty reader might easily mistake the *Critique of Pure Reason* "for a disjointed collection that connects the errors of all metaphysical systems by means of incomprehensible and equivocal principles". This can be explained by the fact that "the *Critique of Pure Reason* is not some new system of metaphysics but contains rather a theory of the entire human cognitive faculty, which reveals the origin of all those affirmations that have been presented in metaphysical systems under the guise of truth; for this reason, the theory is in accord with all these systems for what is true in them and contains their foundation". Leibniz had also observed that there is something true in contrary metaphysical theories, but he had not shown that the origin of such an "extraordinary phenomenon" lay in the very faculty of thought. This was done "only [by] Kant with his explanation of the origin of any metaphysical illusory appearance (*Schein*): and for this reason his system also contains the only teaching that can allow us to find the true thread in the



history of philosophy". In this regard he recalls Reinhold's *Briefe* in the *Teutscher Merkur*, which constitute "a remarkable proof" of this historiographical approach; he concludes: "For this reason the Kantian system is also of great value for those lovers of philosophy who find the highly instructive illustration of the first efforts of the human spirit to find principles and abstract doctrines fascinating" (ALZ, no. 186, 23 June, 1789, cols 674–675).

(d) *A typological history of philosophy*

The historians of philosophy who follow Kant's method all fully believe in the definitive nature of Criticism: the discovery of the critical position permitted the foundation of philosophy as a science because Criticism establishes the conditions for the possibility of knowing. Criticism is not a philosophy that places itself on the same ground as other philosophies, which have not known, or only partly known, or known in a fragmentary way, the principles and laws of rational activity; in a certain sense, Criticism is not even a philosophy but is "propædæutic" to science. Tennemann, in particular, insists on this theme, which is Kantian, but it can be found to a certain extent in everyone, in Reinhold as in Buhle, in Fülleborn as in Heydenreich. Kantian philosophy marks the transition from "progress towards science" and "progress in science"; Kant effects a revolution in the field of philosophy similar to that of Galileo in the field of natural science.

The development of philosophical knowledge does not stop at the Kantian turning-point, yet Criticism remains a definitive point of arrival beyond which it is impossible to go. This aporia is solved by distinguishing between the knowledge of contents, which is open to continual progress, and a propædæutic reflection on the forms and ways in which reason operates. As a reflection on the conditions for the possibility of cognition, Criticism determines the "limits to the cognizable, beyond which no *external* progress is possible", while the restriction of the field now favours "progress *internal* to the boundless field of the cognizable" (Reinhold, *Briefe*, II, pp. 474–475). Thus Criticism is definitive because it is knowledge not of contents but of formal structures: the unchangeable laws of reason. Since the powers of reason, or of the spirit (*Gemüt*), are unchangeable, and known thoroughly, the historian of philosophy possesses scientific tools enabling him to interpret the past.

Reason, whose unchangeable structures have been discovered by Criticism, is, for all these historians of philosophy, human reason. The transcendental forms of reason are reduced to forms of human reason: philosophy is the "science of the nature of man", the "science of the human representative faculty", the "science of the nature of the human spirit", the "science of the forms, rules and principles of the original faculties of the human spirit", and so on. For all these Kantian historians of philosophy, the transcendental is inscribed into the nature of human reason. The history of philosophy records the immediate, not reflected, activity of reason as a spontaneous function of the spirit. By some it is considered the gradual unfolding of reason, which reaches its final destination in Kant; yet it is still man's reason, the development of human self-knowledge, not the self-manifestation of a universal reason. The history of philosophy is not the history of the "spirit of the world" or the self-revelation of a reason that is the absolute itself, as it was to be in Hegel. An

anthropological, or even psychological, interpretation of the Kantian transcendental is an element common to these historians of philosophy. It does not seem to them that this is a simplistic, or in any case questionable, interpretation of Kantianism: they fully accept it as obvious.

The object of the history of philosophy is, therefore, the immediate activity of reason, which has, however, not operated arbitrarily but according to cognizable laws. The critical reflection of reason upon itself has led to the discovery of the unchangeable lawfulness of human reason. The historian now has an effective interpretative tool: the critique of reason is capable of defining *a priori* the systematic structure of every philosophy and of indicating all the possible courses of reason. Systems are the object of the history of philosophy. Every system cannot but reproduce the structure of the faculties and powers of the human spirit. Any account of them cannot but adapt the organisation of the philosophies of the ancients and the moderns to Kantian systematics, which expresses the very order of reason. It is important to grasp the “spirit”, the “philosophical sense”, the “soul” of each system. Systems are the product of reason, which proceeds towards its self-knowledge, as yet unknown to itself, which, however, does not mean it is proceeding arbitrarily. With critical philosophy the historian now has a theory that defines beforehand the possible paths of reason. He can now show how each system, even the most erroneous one, in actual fact derives from the powers of the human soul, and indicate the very principles from which each one derives and the rules of the spirit that were active in it: dogmatism, scepticism, rationalism, empiricism, mysticism, and so on. Even mistakes become clear when they are traced back to their roots in the natural dispositions of the soul. In these authors, the history of philosophy tends to become a history by types or models, which are repeated with very few variations in the course of time. The historian of philosophy lists them, describing their possible variations and combinations, indicating their constituent factors in the unchangeable lawfulness of reason.

Unlike the historiography of the late Enlightenment, these authors have no real interest in linking the history of philosophy to social, political or even cultural history. The history of philosophy is constructed prevalently along internal lines, and this characteristic seems to be the forerunner of a trait typical of the subsequent Idealist historiography. The history of philosophy is not, however, a continual process; lacking the idea of a necessary dialectic development, it seems rather like a description of possible ideal types, of cycles of thoughts that are repeated in the ancient and modern world, each of the two great major cycles then containing similar minor ones.

The historiography inspired directly by Kant was constructed entirely within this framework, which also constituted its limitations. The debate that inspired it lasted for the brief period of the first phase of the discussion of Kantianism; at the outset of the new century, with the success of Schelling's Idealism, the cycle can already be considered over. Tennemann, who was to continue to write until 1819, appears outdated compared to the philosophical culture of the time, despite the fact that his works continued to be widely used. Buhle, the other great historian inspired by Kant, composed his works on the history of philosophy in the years between 1796

and 1805. There are no other authors of general histories of philosophy of Kantian inspiration; at the most, we can recall the history of scepticism by the theologian and historian of the church, Karl Friedrich Stäudlin.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, Tennemann's methodological approach survived, thanks above all to the great success of his *Grundriss* as a school textbook. Reinhold's son, Ernst Christian Gottlieb, who published a textbook on the history of philosophy in three volumes from 1828 to 1830, and in 1836 an abridged version of it, explicitly referred to Tennemann's general approach and major theories. Ernst Christian Reinhold's works were fairly successful and were republished several times, but they were intended exclusively for popular and didactic use (see below, pp. 962–963).

We can also link some thinkers writing a little later, in the full flowering of Idealism, to historians directly inspired by Kantianism, since they shared the anthropological interpretation of the Kantian transcendental, which is why they are included in this chapter. The most important of these historians of philosophy was Jakob Friedrich Fries, a thinker who has an important place in post-Kantian philosophy and who also wrote essays on the history of philosophy and, in the last period of his life, a general history of philosophy. Fries rejects the Hegelian conception of the historiography of philosophy for its metaphysical and theological ontologization of the human mind; but he does not agree with that of Schleiermacher's hermeneutic school, either. As we shall see later, in Fries, as in the early Kantians, the interpretative (or hermeneutic) tool is connected to a rigid idea of the normativeness of reason. Besides Fries, we also have to recall here two of his followers, Ernst Sigmund Mirbt, author of a history of recent German philosophy (*Kant und seine Nachfolger, oder Geschichte des Ursprungs und der Fortbildung der neueren Philosophie*, Jena: Hochhausen, 1841), and the better-known Ernst Friedrich Apelt, who also produced a kind of history of modern philosophy (*Die Epochen der Geschichte der Menschheit. Eine historisch-philosophische Skizze*, Jena: Hochhausen, 1845–1846, 2 vols; 2nd edition: Jena: Mauke, 1852), carried out from Fries' psychologistic form of Criticism. However, neither of these cases concern general histories of philosophy and, anyway, in both of them the speculative, polemical and critical intention clearly prevails over the historical one.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, there are several examples of 'speculative' historical works on 'more recent' or 'modern' German philosophy, mostly dealing with developments in philosophy from Kant to Hegel in a critical theoretical

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<sup>10</sup>K.F. Stäudlin, *Geschichte und Geist des Skepticismus: vorzüglich in Rücksicht auf Moral und Religion* (Leipzig: S. L. Crusius, 1794), 2 vols, pp. X-563 and 309 (reviewed by Tennemann in Niethammer's *Philosophisches Journal*, I/3 (1795), pp. 274–284). The historical exposition is preceded by four essays on the spirit and form, origins, effects and history of scepticism. For Stäudlin, Kantian philosophy clarifies the connection between religious and moral convictions and protects them from attacks on the part of scepticism; the same "eclectic mix of scepticism, Kantianism and Christianity" is also present in other works by the same author, among which it is worth mentioning his *Geschichte der Moralphilosophie* (Hannover: Helwing, 1822, pp. xxii, 1055); see J.C. Laursen, in DECGPh, III, pp. 1122–1125.

key, which reflect the widespread conception of a necessary development, somehow beyond the intentions of the authors, of post-Kantian philosophy. Some of these works are highly critical of both the Romantic and the Idealist-Hegelian developments in German philosophy, and can, moreover, retrace some of their theories to aspects of Kant's philosophy (and, above all, of the early debate on Kantianism) that had not met with much success or had remained marginal in the transformation of Criticism into Idealism. This is the case of the historical-philosophical contributions by Immanuel Hermann Fichte,<sup>11</sup> who is also known for having been the editor of his father's works, and of Heinrich Moritz Chalybäus, who collaborated over a long period with Fichte's son.

In the theological field, Fichte sustains the personality and transcendence of God against Hegelian immanentism; in the field of anthropology, the question concerned man's autonomous reality as a finite being. Fichte criticised the Hegelian doctrine of the finite: for Hegel, the finite is what is surpassed, a simple moment in the process in which the infinite consists, thus not something real, but something merely "ideal". Fichte strongly stresses the role of the individual, of the single person, in all fields of history. He protests against the Hegelian attempt "to reduce the entire history of philosophy [...] to a totally impersonal dialectical process, wherein subjects are solely the bearers, who appear externally, of the internal necessity of the concept, which becomes effectual in them".<sup>12</sup> For Fichte, the history of philosophy should not be conceived either as "a chance sum of systems that follow one another" or as "a strictly necessary movement", in which it is possible "to show the immediately dialectical passage between individual systems". Even within a conception of the development of philosophy as an organic and unitary one, a role played by the creative personality in the formation of systems must be acknowledged: the individual is a forerunner of the future through a completely new creative act of the spirit, which is in a relationship with what historically precedes it that cannot be wholly determined. This "exceedance of the individual" (*Ueberschuss des Individuellen*), which is the fruit of the creativity of the single person, introduces into the system, and into the still unilateral principle that inspires it, future points of view, determining in the system "the contradictory dual condition of a relative perfection and of a prophetic, anticipatory intuition", which makes it

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<sup>11</sup>*Beiträge zur Charakteristik der neueren Philosophie, zur Vermittlung ihrer Gegensätze* (Sulzbach: Seidel, 1829, pp. xxx-498). A second edition of the work, much enlarged and with changes, was published under the title of *Beiträge zur Charakteristik der neueren Philosophie, oder kritische Geschichte derselben von Descartes und Locke bis auf Hegel* (Sulzbach: Seidel, 1841, pp. xx-1051). Immanuel Hermann Fichte (1796, Jena – 1879, Stuttgart), son of Johann Gottlieb, studied philology and philosophy in Berlin, where he obtained his habilitation in 1818 with a work *De philosophiae novae Platonicae origine*; he taught for over ten years in Düsseldorf, then in Bonn from 1836 to 1842, and finally in Tübingen, to where he was invited in 1842, remaining there until 1862, when he abandoned teaching.

<sup>12</sup>I.H. Fichte, *Vermischte Schriften zur Philosophie, Theologie und Ethik* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1869), vol. I, p. 54. On Immanuel H. Fichte's criticism of Hegel cf. A. Hartmann, *Der Spätidealismus und die Hegelsche Dialektik* (Berlin, 1937), pp. 127–166.

incoherent in itself yet rich in future developments. The figure of the elder Fichte is exemplary in this regard. The history of modern philosophy cannot be explained in terms of a dialectic transition from Fichte to Schelling and from the latter to Hegel: Fichte's philosophy, whose so-called second phase was appreciated by his son, in particular the fideistic-religious aspects that could present some analogy with Jacobi's interpretation of Kantianism, contains "in a totally free form and thanks to an anticipatory inspiration" not only Schelling, then Hegel's, philosophy but also surpasses the latter (I.H. Fichte, *Beiträge*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. IV–VI).

Of a more popular nature (which explains its great success) is the work by Heinrich Moritz Chalybäus (1796, Pfaffroda – 1862, Dresden),<sup>13</sup> which originated in a series of lectures for the general public held in the 1835–1836 *Wintersemester* in Dresden. The author, who appreciates Kant's moral theology above all and dedicates ample space to Jacobi's thought, interprets the post-Kantian development of philosophy in a non-dialectical key; he is also one of those who reappraise the figure of the elder Fichte, in whom "the key to understanding all modern philosophers" is to be found.<sup>14</sup> The work, which was republished in Germany several times in enlarged, updated editions, saw two English translations in 1854, in London and Edinburgh.<sup>15</sup> The Edinburgh edition was also preceded by a brief introductory note by William Hamilton, who expressed a very positive verdict on Chalybäus' work. The success of the textbook in Great Britain is explained by the fact that, first in Scotland with Hamilton, then in Oxford with his follower Henry L. Mansel, Kant's philosophy, through the fideistic-religious interpretation offered by Jacobi (which Chalybäus appreciated), had been considered independently of the Idealist developments it had seen in Germany and, likened to the Scottish philosophy of common sense, had been used for apologetic-religious purposes.

<sup>13</sup>H.M. Chalybäus, *Historische Entwicklung der spekulativen Philosophie von Kant bis Hegel. Zu näherer Verständigung des wissenschaftlichen Publicums mit der neuesten Schule dargestellt* (Dresden: Grimmer, 1837; Dresden and Leipzig, 1839<sup>2</sup>; Leipzig, 1843<sup>3</sup>; 1848<sup>4</sup>; 1860<sup>5</sup>). Chalybäus contributed several articles to the journal founded and edited by Immanuel H. Fichte, *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und spekulative Theologie*. Of historiographical interest is the essay 'Philosophie der Geschichte und Geschichte der Philosophie', that appeared in vol. I (1837), pp. 301–338, where the author discusses Hegel's *Vorlesungen* on the philosophy of history and the works on history of philosophy by K.L. Michelet, L. Feuerbach and J.F. Fries, criticising the dialectic interpretation of history. Some years later, Chalybäus also dedicated an essay (*Die moderne Sophistik*, Kiel: Schwes, 1842) to criticising Hegelian dialectics itself.

<sup>14</sup>"Fichte has been misunderstood by almost all parties, and that not only during his lifetime, but in part even in *our own* days. By this we mean, that the opinion has been generally entertained that his Idealism was really of no importance, and that it was not worth while to give oneself the trouble of studying it. In attempting to study the philosophy of our days, his writings have been generally wholly left out, and yet it is *there*, and *there only*, that we can obtain the key to the understanding of all modern philosophers" (Chalybäus, *Historische Entwicklung*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 149).

<sup>15</sup>*Historical Survey of Speculative Philosophy, from Kant to Hegel* [...] Translated from the fourth edition of the German by Alfred Tulk (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Logmans, 1854); *Historical Development of Speculative Philosophy, from Kant to Hegel*. From the German [...] by the Rev. Alfred Edersheim (Edinburgh: Clark, 1854).

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*Enlightenment Influenced His Reception of Kant* (Berlin, 2011); on the *Briefe*, and in particular on young Reinhold, cf. also A. Pupi, *La formazione della filosofia di K.L. Reinhold* (Milano, 1966), especially pp. 62–103, 144–146, 164–176, 223–224 and 392–486; K. Ameriks, ‘Introduction’ to Reinhold, *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. IX–L; *Karl Leonhard Reinhold and the Enlightenment*, ed. G. Di Giovanni (Dordrecht, 2010). For an overview of Reinhold’s highly vast and varied production, cf. A. von Schönborn, *Karl Leonhard Reinhold. Eine annotierte Bibliographie* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1991); on the reception of Reinhold’s works see also *Die zeigenössischen Rezensionen der Elementarphilosophie K.L. Reinholds*, hrsg. v. F. Fabbianelli (Hildesheim, 2003).

## 11.1 Johann Gottlieb Buhle (1763–1821)

### *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*

Giovanni Santinello (deceased)\*

**11.1.1** J. G. Buhle was born in Brunswick on 29th September, 1763, the son of Cristian August, a surgeon. He studied philology and philosophy in Helmstedt and Göttingen, where he settled in 1783, and took part in the famous seminar on philology held by Ch.G. Heyne, one of the most prominent university figures in the second half of the eighteenth century. Heyne was not only a philologist but also an archeologist, art critic and historian; he was concerned with *Altertumswissenschaft* in a historical dimension, looked up to Winckelmann and Lessing, and was a friend and admirer of Herder’s. Buhle was a *magister philosophiae* and an unsalaried lecturer (*Privatdozent*) in Göttingen; in 1787, he became temporary professor of philosophy there and finally, in 1794, full professor. He taught logic, metaphysics, the history of philosophy and the history of classical literature, but he dedicated himself above all to the historiography of philosophy and philology, editing works by Aristotle and Aratus. Along with F. Bouterwek, whose main interest was aesthetics, Buhle represents the Kantian school of philosophical thought in Göttingen, where, after the initial objections on the part of Feder, Meiners and others, Kant’s thought found great favour even among poets and scholars like Bürger and Lichtenberg, jurists like Hugo and Martens, and theologians like Ammon and Stäudlin.

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\*Revised and updated by Giuseppe Micheli.

Invited to teach at Moscow University, Buhle moved to Russia in the autumn of 1804, taking over the post of his colleague, Heinrich Grellmann, professor of history and “statistics”, who had arrived there shortly before but died suddenly. Several professors from German universities, particularly Göttingen, responded to such invitations and were attracted by the favourable economic conditions offered by the government of St. Petersburg, which sought to increase university learning in Russia.<sup>16</sup> Indeed links between Göttingen and the Russian cultural world were already very strong: from the 1740s several Russian students enrolled there, where Haller found them among those present at his lectures. The geographer Büsching became a preacher at St. Peter’s church in St. Petersburg and head of the school he himself had founded there (see above, p. 483). Study trips abroad, forbidden for some time by an edict issued by the successor to Catherine, Tsar Paul I, recommenced when Alexander I acceded to the throne (Cf. Wischnitzer, *Die Universität Göttingen*, pp. 9–39). However, there were other reasons for Buhle’s decision to go to Russia, such as his aversion to the Napoleonic policies towards the German States. He decided to accept the invitation from Moscow when the French occupied Hannover, and he remained there until 1814, as full professor of natural law and law of nations (*ius gentium*), maintaining occasional contact with Göttingen.<sup>17</sup> He found himself involved in the tragic events following the Napoleonic campaign in Russia, escaped the burning of Moscow, and spent the harsh winter of 1812 as a refugee. In 1814, he had the opportunity to return to Germany and was able to obtain a chair as full professor of politics and the science of law in the *Karolinum* College in his native city of Brunswick, where he remained until his death on 11th August, 1821.

**11.1.2** Buhle’s literary output is very extensive, concerning both historiography in general and philosophy. His major works were all written before 1805, that is to say before his move to Moscow and his ten-year stay in Russia. His early *Calendarium Palestinae oeconomicum* (Göttingen, 1785), was a *Preisschrift*; this was preceded by a ‘Geschichte der Anne Boleyn, der zweyten Gemahlin Heinrichs des Achten’, in *Gelehrte Beyträge zu den Braunschw. Anzeigen*, nos 67–70.

His collaboration with Heyne produced works on Aristotelian philology (such as *De distributione librorum Aristotelis in exotericos et acroamaticos eiusdem rationibus et causis* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1786); *Novam omnium operum Aristotelis editionem, impensis societatis Bipontinae propediem evulgandam* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1790), followed by the edition: *Aristotelis Opera omnia graece, ad optimorum exemplarium fidem recensuit, annotationem criticam, librorum argumenta et novam versionem latinam adiecit* Jo. Theophilus Buhle (Zweibrücken: ex

<sup>16</sup>The GGA, no. 70 (3<sup>rd</sup> May, 1804), pp. 689–691, report that foreign professors were paid a salary of 1,500 roubles, full professors 2,000 roubles, and were given the honorary, hereditary title of *Hofrat*, adviser to the court.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. GGA, no. 98 (22<sup>nd</sup> June, 1805), p. 973; no. 154 (28<sup>th</sup> September, 1805), pp. 1535–1536; no. 208 (28<sup>th</sup> December, 1807), p. 2080; no. 160 (6<sup>th</sup> October, 1814), p. 1596–98.



Typographia Societatis), in five volumes (VOL. 1, 1791, pp. XXXI–548: besides the ‘Praefatio’, pp. III–XXXI, it contains the Greek text and the Latin translation of the histories of the life of Aristotle by Diogenes Laertius, Ammonius and others; a chronological biography of Aristotle by Buhle himself; the previously published *De distributione librorum Aristotelis*, an index of the codices, editions and translations of Aristotle, an index of the Greek, Arab and Latin commentators; finally, each preceded by an *argumentum*, Porphyry’s *Isagoge* and the *Categories*, with the Greek text and Latin translation; VOL. 2, 1792, pp. XVI–719: *De interpretatione, Prior and Posterior Analytics*; VOL. 3, 1792, pp. XIV–700: *Topics* and *Sophistical Refutations*; VOL. 4, 1793, pp. XVI–574: *Rhetoric*; VOL. 5, 1801, pp. LXIV–411: *Rhetoric to Alexander* and *Poetics*; the edition stops here). Today, opinion on this work is not favourable: philological mistakes have been reported and arbitrary, erroneous interpretations of Aristotelian thought have been pointed out.

Another of Buhle’s philological undertakings is his edition of Aratus: *Arati Solensis Phaenomena et Diosemea* [...], (Leipzig: Weidemann, 1793–1801, 2 vols). For use in schools, he published the Greek text of Aristotle’s *Poetics* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck et Ruprecht, 1794) in a separate edition, and a German translation of it, *Ueber die Kunst der Poesie* (Berlin: Vossische Buchhandlung, 1798), accompanied by the translation, from English, of the work by Thomas Twining on poetics and musical imitation.

Buhle wrote several academic essays dealing particularly with philosophical and cultural historiography, among them the ‘Commentatio de ortu et progressu pantheismi inde a Xenophane Colophonio primo eius auctore usque ad Spinozam’, in *Commentationes Societatis regiae scientiarum Gottingensis, Tom. X classis historicae et philologicae* (Göttingen: typis Jo. Ch. Dieterich, 1791), pp. 157–183; the edition *Sextus Empiricus, oder der Skepticismus der Griechen* (Lemgo: Meyer, 1801); and the study *Ueber den Ursprung und die vornehmsten Schicksale der Orden der Rosenkreuzer und Freymaurer. Eine historisch-kritische Untersuchung* (Göttingen: Röwer, 1804).

However, Buhle’s historiographical activity was more often characterised by his plans and projects for wide-ranging works of an encyclopaedic nature, at times merely begun but never completed: the *Grundzüge einer allgemeinen Encyklopädie der Wissenschaften* (Lemgo: Meyer, 1790), and the *Geschichte des philosophirenden menschlichen Verstandes*, Part 1 (Lemgo: Meyer, 1793) (the only part that appeared, dealing with the origins of philosophy, Egyptian philosophy and early Greek philosophy up to the Eleatic school). The two great histories of philosophy which we will look at here, on the other hand, are complete: the *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie und einer kritischen Literatur derselben* [= *Lehr.*] (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1796–1804, eight parts in nine volumes), and the *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie seit der Epoche der Wiederherstellung der Wissenschaften* [= *Gesch.*] (Göttingen: J.G. Rosenbusch’s Wittwe – J.F. Röwer, 1800–1805, 6 vols; repr. in the series *Aetas Kantiana*, Bruxelles, 1969). The *Geschichte* constitutes the 6th section of a history of modern culture, to which several teachers in Göttingen contributed, organised into no less than 11

sections by J.G. Eichhorn: the *Geschichte der Künste und Wissenschaften seit der Wiederherstellung derselben bis an das Ende des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*.<sup>18</sup>

Buhle was also very active as a publisher and editor of modern texts: it is sufficient to cite the publication of the epistolary by the Göttingen orientalist Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791), Eichhorn's master (*Literarischer Briefwechsel*, Leipzig: Weidmann, 1794 and 1795, 2 Parts), and, in collaboration with F. Bouterwek, the edition of the journal *Göttingisches philosophisches Museum* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1798–1799, 2 vols; repr. Hildesheim, 1979).

He also wrote school textbooks inspired by Kantian thought: the *Einleitung in die allgemeine Logik und Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1795), appendix to one of his textbooks on general logic, continued in the *Entwurf der Transscendentalphilosophie* (Göttingen: Ph.G. Schröder, 1798; repr. in the series *Aetas Kantiana*, Bruxelles, 1974), that summarises the first *Kritik* and the *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe*; the *Lehrbuch des Naturrechts* (Göttingen: Röwer, 1798), and the *Ideen zur Rechtswissenschaft, Moral und Politik*, 1. Sammlung, (Göttingen: Ph.G. Schröder, 1799; repr. in the series *Aetas Kantiana*, 1969); I have not been able to find a 2nd "Sammlung" allegedly published in 1800.

During his stay in Moscow, Buhle took on the work of publishing the *Journal der schönen Künste* (Moskau, 1807, 3 nos) and outlined a vast plan for a Russian historiographical history, of which only the first part appeared: *Versuch einer kritischen Literatur der Russischen Geschichte. 1. Theil, enthaltend die Literatur der älteren allgemeinen nordischen Geschichte* (Moskwa: N.S. Wsewolojsky, 1810), pp. xx–420 (he had written an essay on a similar topic several years earlier: *Bemerkungen über den historischen Gebrauch der Quellen zur ältesten Geschichte der Cultur bey den Celtischen und Scandinavischen Völkern*, Göttingen, 1788).

In the years shortly after his return to Germany, Buhle published a homage to his master and colleague, Johann Joachim Eschenburg, a scholar of aesthetics, on the occasion of his 50th year of teaching, as the foreword to a work on Tacitus: *Epistola ad virum illustrem J.J. Eschenburg [. . .]. Accedunt observationes criticae de C. Corn. Taciti stilo adversus J. Hill, philologum Edinburgensem* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1817). He also published the work *Ueber Ursprung und Leben des Menschengeschlechts und das künftige Loos nach dem Tode: eine freye naturwissenschaftliche Ansicht* (Braunschweig: Meyer, 1821).<sup>19</sup> His contributions

<sup>18</sup>Cf. GGA, no. 189 (26th Sept., 1804), pp. 1881–87; Marino, pp. 284–287; cf. also above, p. 536.

<sup>19</sup>*Ueber Ursprung* is a work that deals with the problem, similar in part to that of Kant and Herder, of man's origin, history, and destiny. "An open view of a scientific naturalistic nature" means for Buhle, first of all, freedom from Biblical revelation, from all myths, and the possibility of the "conjecture" of man's being born of "mother Earth", as is the case of all other living beings, even though man belongs to a far superior degree of reality. He is opposed to both "materialism" and "spiritualism", which in its purest form is found only in Descartes, to whose concept of the soul only Aristotle, among the ancients, came close with his doctrine of *nous*. On the contrary, Buhle maintains a view that he calls "dynamism". "In general, I consider the soul in a purely dynamic way (*rein dynamisch*), like a compound of forces, joined within to a principal force to which they belong and which they serve, and these forces constitute with it and through it a person, a subject"

to periodicals and academic articles of the time were numerous and varied, and included, for example, *Bibliothek der alten Literatur und Kunst*; *Commentationes societatis regiae scientiarum Gottingensis*; *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*; *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung*.

**11.1.3** Buhle does not formulate a wide-ranging theory of the two concepts of philosophy and the history of philosophy. His historiographical works do not present the lengthy premises or introductions that we find in Heumann and Brucker, or later in Tennemann and Hegel. He seems almost to stand outside the theoretical debate on the concept of the ‘history of philosophy’ that Kantianism aroused in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century; yet he reveals his knowledge of it by citing, for example, in the ‘Vorerinnerungen’ to his *Lehrbuch*, Reinhold’s work, included in Fülleborn’s *Beiträge*, and that of Goess (*Lehr.*, p. 5).<sup>20</sup> He is familiar with Kant and shares his thought almost *in toto*. His philosophy is Kant’s Criticism, and, according to him, this is undoubtedly philosophy itself. In short, Buhle seems to be more interested in doing historiography than in theorising about it, and not only in his historical works, because the other so-called ‘theoretical’ works also revolve around Kant and end up by being little more than an account, or a clear, intelligent application, of his thought.

Just before expounding Kant’s philosophy, at the end of the last volume of his *Geschichte*, and after having “narrated the most important moments in the history of modern philosophy up to the contemporary age”, Buhle feels the need for a comprehensive look at philosophy in general in order to determine it according to the characteristics identified by the founder of criticism. “Despite all the attempts, undertaken by the best minds in the course of several millennia, to base philosophy as a science on sound principles, this aim had never been achieved by anyone. Of all the problems that civilised human reason is obliged by its own nature to tackle, no-one had received from it a totally satisfying reply. Solutions to these

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(*Ueber Ursprung*, p. 51). He likens this concept of the soul to the Aristotelian concept of *entelechia* (cf. p. 52 and note). The consideration “of the probable destiny of the animating forces on our Earth after the death of individual organisms” leads him to concede the survival of all types of souls (“vernichtet kann sie [die blosse reine Lebenskraft] durch den Tod nicht werden als lebendige Realität”: p. 94), which, when separated from the body, seek in a way unknown to us new organisms to which they may become united, in a kind of metempsychosis. The same is true of the animal psychic forces that exist in man (senses, instinct, fantasy, memory, etc.). The destiny, however, of the highest forces of souls on Earth, the human rational spirit in its theoretical and practical relations, is different (pp. 100–101). On the basis of the characteristics of reason, which is superior to all animal faculties (he stresses the capacity for abstraction [p. 101], the language and the moral faculties), Buhle believes that this spirit can survive death in personal identity; nonetheless, we can still raise “some doubts on the basis of rational arguments” concerning this question and, he states, “the how (*das Wie*) of this survival” remains totally “in obscurity” (p. 155).

<sup>20</sup>See K.L. Reinhold, ‘Vorlesung über den Begriff der Geschichte der Philosophie’, BGPh, no. 1 (1791), pp. 3–35; G.F.D. Goess, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte der Philosophie und über das System des Thales* (Erlangen, 1794). On this debate cf. L. Geldsetzer, ‘Der Methodenstreit in der Philosophiegeschichtsschreibung (1791–1820)’, *Kant-Studien*, LVI (1966), pp. 519–527; Braun, pp. 206–240.

problems had certainly been contemplated. It was thought that well-founded, precise demonstrations of such solutions had been found. Yet every previous philosopher had always been confuted by a successor, and nobody had succeeded in presenting the universal validity of his propositions in such a way as to render them acceptable to all" (*Gesch.*, VI, pp. 575–576). For Buhle, therefore, only Kant's discovery of the critical position allowed for the foundation of philosophy as a science, because criticism is the determination of the conditions for the possibility of knowing. Propedeutics, says Kant; the doctrine of science, as it was by called by Fichte, who remained, despite everything, basically a Kantian; transcendental philosophy, Buhle calls it: "Any knowledge that concerns the general a priori possibility and validity of knowledge is called transcendental. Therefore, tracing knowledge back to its earliest roots and to a priori conditions is the task of *Transcendental Philosophy*" (*Entwurf*, § 18, p. 10).

This concept, according to Buhle, provides not only the foundations for philosophy as a science, putting an end to inconclusive disputes once and for all, but also its distinction from other sciences. Unlike Kant, Buhle displays a certain indifference, or lack of sensitivity, to the sciences of nature. There is no mention of Galileo anywhere in his vast history of modern philosophy. While there are no fewer than 33 pages on Petrarch (II, pp. 86–119), there is only a very short section on Newton (*Gesch.*, IV, pp. 107–119): Newton's discoveries "are the subject of the history of mathematical studies and physics rather than the history of philosophy" (II, p. 109). This was not because Buhle had too narrow and exclusive a concept of philosophy: just as in the case of Petrarch, but to an even greater extent, Buhle dwells at greater length when describing, for example, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English moral doctrines (*Gesch.*, V, pp. 289–366), or Hume, Smith and Steuart's political economy (*Gesch.*, V, pp. 481–768; VI, pp. 3–50). It appears, therefore, that he lacks sensitivity for the sciences of nature and is far more interested in the so-called "human sciences". This fact might be of some interest and illuminate a point on which his *Transscendentalphilosophie* differs from that of Kant. One characteristic of Buhle's seems in fact to be a fundamentally anthropological approach, which is rather alien to Kant but close to the standpoints of the "popular philosophers" (cf. above, Chap. 9, Introd., b). Indeed, in the 'Introduction' to the *Entwurf* he takes his own personal starting point from the concept of the activity (*Wirksamkeit*) of beings (*Wesen*). This can be originated from outside a being, as is the case of the activity of the inorganic world, or can be spontaneous (*selbstthätig*), as in the organic world of living creatures. The latter can, in turn, be mechanical activity, as in animals, or freely chosen activity, as in a rational being. Both forms of independent activity, that of animals and that of rational beings, take place through the consciousness of the self (*Selbstbewusstseyn*). In animals, however, this self-consciousness is restricted to the distinction between the self and the world, without ever arriving at the point of making the self the object of reflection, something that is carried out by a free, rational being. "In man, animality and rationality are united. And the indeterminate principle of both is the soul (*das Gemüth*)". "Nothing is more necessary to man than a *knowledge of himself* that is as precise and well-founded as possible. In fact, the more he progresses in culture in general, the more aware he becomes of the

presence within himself of a principle that does not belong to his animality. His activity is constituted by acts of freedom" (*Entwurf*, §§ 1–8, pp. 3–5).

Man's self-consciousness, capacity for reflection and knowledge of himself, founded on reason and freedom: these are fully Kantian concepts, which Buhle, however, sees in an anthropological light. While for Kant such activities belong to reason and are to be considered within a transcendental perspective, for Buhle they refer to man's reality and outline how he is to be defined. Therefore, he does not hesitate to conceive of transcendental philosophy as the development of human self-knowledge considered within the very reality of the problems it raises. "Transcendental philosophy recalls man to his own 'I', from which all his feeling, knowing, and acting derive, and it is the only place where the final aim of human existence can be grasped. In fact, either man is the obscurest enigma to himself, his feeling a strange exchange of data, his knowledge a play on dreamy images lacking reality or truth, his aspirations and ceaseless actions a chance, adventurous mechanism (yet the possibility of thinking of man in quite the opposite way contradicts this), or the laws that determine and govern his activity are given in man himself" (*Entwurf*, § 36, p. 19). More explicitly, though extremely succinctly, Buhle expresses his thoughts in the definition of philosophy given in the first lines of the *Lehrbuch*: "Philosophy is the science that concerns the nature of the human soul in and for itself and the original relationship it has with the objects that exist outside it" (*Lehr.*, § 1, p. 1). For Buhle, one could speak of an idealism reconciled with realism, perhaps an interpretation of the Kantian formula of "transcendental idealism", which connects the admission of the thing in itself with the ideality of experience structured in time and space.

Buhle took part in the discussions which arose in Germany as a result of criticism. He called the objections of Johann Georg Heinrich Feder, Johann August Eberhard, and Johann Christoph Schwab "misunderstandings", because they had interpreted Kant in an idealistic sense, as if the latter had "removed all objective reality" (*Gesch.*, VI, p. 734). In any case, he saw them as opponents, just like Jacobi; the physician and philosopher Johann Albert Heinrich Reimarus, son of the more famous Reimarus, a friend of Lessing's; Ernst Platner; the author of the *Aenesidemus*, that is to say Gottlob Ernst Schulze of Helmstedt; the theologian Johann Friedrich Flatt; Dietrich Tiedemann, and the other theologian, a follower of Reinhold's, Johann Heinrich Abicht; Salomon Maimon; the Freemason Adam Weishaupt; and the Catholic Johann Leonhard Hug. On the contrary, Buhle considered Johann Schultz of Königsberg, Karl Leonhard Reinhold, Ludwig Heinrich Jakob, the theologian Johann Wilhelm Schmid, Karl Heinrich Heydenreich, Christian Wilhelm Snell, Georg Gustav Fülleborn, Jakob Sigismund Beck, and even Fichte to be elucidators of Kant's philosophy (*Entwurf*, § 13, pp. 21–22). It would seem indeed that Buhle greatly appreciated the efforts made by Reinhold, in his *Letters on Kantian Philosophy*, to include intuitions and concepts "in the common generic concept of representation" (*Gesch.*, VI, p. 735). He himself begins his exposition of transcendental philosophy by taking the human capacity for representation (*Vorstellungsvermögen*) as a principle in a way that is very similar to that of Reinhold: "Every illustration of the understanding's activity starts from

the original representing. This is not a proposition but a postulate. Every real representation is preceded by the original representing, and the former is made possible only by means of the latter. And the original representing consists in the tendency of the capacity for representation to place something as the object of representation" (*Entwurf*, §§ 40–46, pp. 23–25).

Nonetheless, Buhle maintains the concept of the thing in itself, and he does so in a sense that we can call realistic. He writes that whereas some authors present the concept of the thing in itself as completely empty and void, and make Kant's thought the system of the most authentic idealism, others, on the contrary, think that the element that characterises transcendental idealism is precisely the thing in itself. Empirical knowledge requires a thing in itself that "the understanding (*Verstand*) makes possible not with regard to its existence but with regard to its sole knowledge". This is what Buhle takes to be the true "nature" of Kant's transcendental idealism (*Entwurf*, § 14, p. 22). Hence, Buhle does not accept the developments of Kant's thoughts in Fichte, to whom he showed a strong antipathy: "The miracle of our time, i.e., the 'I' that posits itself and the world of Mr. Fichte, would have amazed Leibniz", even if Fichte "dreams of some relationship between Leibniz's philosophy and his own" (*Gesch.*, IV, pp. 222–223 note). When, on the other hand, he finds a true similarity in spirit and thought between Bruno and Fichte, Buhle concludes with a somewhat scornful consideration of Fichte: "To complete this parallel fully, one must say that Fichte lacks one very small detail: the profound knowledge, which Bruno had, of ancient literature and philosophy, mathematics, physics and astronomy" (II, p. 856). For him, Bruno's pantheism is an objective realism that coincides with an objective idealism. "It is the objective, infinite I, in whom thought and being are one, that alone constitutes true reality [...]. The changing being of the subjective I is only a trace of the true I. Healthy philosophical reason agrees with this way of thinking of Bruno's rather than with that of the new master of the doctrine of science in Germany, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, which comes down to a subjective pantheism" (II, p. 854).

One cannot surpass Kant even in the sense of the possibility of a science higher than criticism. Since Kant in his modesty spoke only of an "idea" of transcendental philosophy, "some of the new thinkers in their obscure fantasy took this name to mean an even higher science, rather than thinking of it as a clear concept". Yet Kant himself, publically evaluating Fichte's doctrine of science, contradicted this intent and presented "his own critical works as a complete transcendental philosophy" (*Gesch.*, VI, p. 729). Buhle's conclusive criticism of Fichte is all in the key of the realism of the thing in itself, or, as he believed he had made clear, in the key of transcendental idealism. "The explanation [provided by Fichte] for the cause of the check (*Anstoß*), the opposition to the 'I' [on the part of the non-I], on the validity or invalidity of which the doctrine of science stands or falls, is based on deception and cannot be defended" (VI, p. 772; for Buhle's opinion of post-Kantian idealism in Germany, see also below, pp. 822–825).

In the *Lehrbuch* the concept of the history of philosophy can be clearly seen as belonging to that of philosophy. "The history of philosophy is a pragmatic account of the most important attempts by the best minds in antiquity and in the modern

age to realize that science”: that is, to realize philosophy, which as we have seen is “the science of the nature of the human soul”. “The aim of the history of philosophy is to outline historically the expressions in which philosophy in general manifested itself the reasons behind its philosophising, and hence the problems it set itself to satisfy its theoretical and practical needs, and to characterise the methods employed to resolve such problems”; the history of philosophy reveals how “little by little philosophy came to be what it is at present” (*Lehr.*, §§ 1–2, pp. 1–2).

Buhle had employed the same concepts some years before in his first attempt to write a work on general historiography. “By the history of the human understanding which philosophises, I mean a pragmatic account (*eine pragmatische Erzählung*) of the many attempts carried out by the best minds in antiquity and in modern times to reach satisfactory conclusions about the most important properties of reason” (*Gesch. des philos. mensch. Verstandes*, ‘Vorbericht’, p. III). Thus, the concept of ‘narrating’ is repeated, almost as if the logical structure of historiography is not that of ‘deducing’ or ‘demonstrating’ but simply of telling a story. Later, in the same work, when he is about to discuss the hypothesis of the origin of mankind and the dispute over the possibility of considering philosophical culture to have derived from a first original people, Buhle does not hesitate to take as a starting point what he calls “a simple principle”: “that one cannot hope to have discovered any historical truth where there is no information, and that any historical conjecture” is thwarted “as soon as the data upon which it should rest are illustrated imprecisely and employed falsely”. “First of all, one should collect the facts, put them in order, judge them and know them well, and only then start to reason, while usually reasoning came first, and afterwards it was thought to report the facts” (*Gesch. des philos. mensch. Verstandes*, pp. 15–16).

The other concept on which Buhle dwells is that of the subject of the history of philosophy, which, in the *Geschichte*, is “the human, philosophising understanding”, also called reason. In this first work of his, he insists less on the “philosophemes” attained than on the narration of the “path” followed by reason to reach them, or rather, he says, “on the the representation of the understanding in its own activity” (*Gesch. des philos. mensch. Verstandes*, pp. III–IV). In the *Lehrbuch*, on the other hand, some years later, he stresses how philosophy turned itself into a science in the course of its history; therefore, he highlights not the subjective aspect of philosophical activity but the objective aspect of the knowledge acquired.

The discussion of the “concept” of the history of philosophy led Buhle to explicitly clarify its connections with the other historical disciplines to which it is related. The history of philosophy is not the “history of mankind’s culture in arts and sciences but only the history of thought about the most natural and necessary properties of reason”; it is not erudition, “a collection of literary and biographical information” about philosophers or schools, but rather a “history of their systems and their opinions”; it is not a “history of religions”, as expressions of the exterior cult dedicated to God, although religion is “an object of philosophy and its history” since it concerns the concept of the relationship of man with divinity, conceived as both a physical power and a moral judge. Less understandable is the statement that the history of philosophy “is not the history of the human spirit

(*Geschichte des menschlichen Geistes*) or of the development of its capacities and faculties at different times and in different circumstances, but rather the history of its aspirations (*Bestrebungen*) to understand itself (*um sich selbst zu verstehen*)" (*Lehr.*, § 3, pp. 2–3). Perhaps the "history of the spirit" reminds Buhle of Brucker and Deslandes' *historia intellectus humani*, and the concept of 'intellectus' or 'esprit' seems to him too extrinsic, too exterior, compared with that self-knowledge of the reason in which, according to him, philosophy resides. He therefore needs to underline the distinction: not a history of capacities or faculties or, in the final analysis, of objective conquests, but the history of reason's self-knowledge. It seems that there is in all this a concern not to disperse the history of philosophy in a general history of culture, even though Buhle speaks of related (*verwandten*) disciplines, and even though, quite rightly, his rigour as a philosopher does not prevent him, in practising historiography, from keeping his cultural horizons continually open and from using *subsidiarisch* (an expression that perhaps subordinates too far) information provided by related disciplines.

If kept within its own specific field, the history of philosophy has its uses: it does not satisfy rational curiosity so much as contribute to clarifying the philosophy of the time, since it arose from the most ancient systems, and from them drew and preserved some elements; it safeguards against the blatant mistakes made by reason; it illuminates the state of arts and sciences in past culture, as far as they are connected to the present state of philosophy; and finally, it contributes to the degree of true enlightenment that the most civilised sector of mankind acquired from its very first existence, thus obtaining the indispensable data that permit it to evaluate any possible further perfection of humanity, the means that promote it, and the obstacles to it (*Lehr.*, § 5, pp. 4–5).

Buhle also briefly outlines a history of the historiography of philosophy. The first "idea of a history of philosophy" is found in the works of Plato and Aristotle, who "founded their systems on criticism of the opinions of their predecessors". He reminds readers of the historiographical contributions of Aristotle's school and recalls Cicero, Sextus Empiricus, and the ancient historians (*Sammler*) (Diogenes Laërtius, Athenaeus, Stobaeus, and so forth). Of the moderns he mentions Jonsius, Bayle, Morhof, Heumann, Hissmann and Fülleborn. Starting with Brucker, "in recent decades", the idea of the history of philosophy has become more precise and, partly, more suited to its aims (*Lehr.*, § 6, pp. 5–6). So Buhle continues, and throughout his historical works he acknowledges the debts he owes to his contemporaries: to Tiedemann, above all to Tennemann, but also to the more specific historiographical scholarship of the University of Göttingen: Heeren, Gatterer, Eichhorn and others, as we shall have the occasion to see in some concrete cases.

As we have said, Buhle adds no pages specifically dedicated to defining the concepts of philosophy and the history of philosophy to these simple, concise preliminary reflections, suited for a textbook format. However, some occasional observations can be gleaned from among the vast number of his works, all of which are devoted to practical historiography and not to its theory. Tired of dealing with the disputes between Thomists and Scotists in the sixteenth century, Buhle apologises for shortening his account by saying: "For a pragmatic history of modern



philosophy, whose basic object is the successive refinement of the science itself, it would be against its aims to start characterising even the most famous Scholastics of the sixteenth century” (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 510–511). The expression “pragmatic history”, which was commonly used by German philosophical historiographers from the time of Heumann, is defined here as the history of successive moments of perfecting, with links between each stage, development, and progress; this is why it is instructive. According to Buhle, there would be no pragmatic history, just a mass of information, if he had lingered over all the material concerning the disputes of the sixteenth-century Scholastics, which he judges as sterile and behind their time. In that century, writes Buhle, there was far more in the “pure Peripateticism” of Aristotelian thought and in “original thinkers”, such as, and above all, Bruno and Cardano, Vanini, Campanella and the Florentine Cosimo Ruggeri, astrologer at the court of Caterina de’ Medici, whose atheism Bayle mentions (*Dictionnaire*, entry ‘Ruggeri’).<sup>21</sup>

Another moment of theoretical reflection occurs when Buhle expounds on Kant’s philosophy: Buhle makes use of the last pages of the first *Critique*, dedicated to the history of pure reason, in order to demonstrate how transcendental philosophy also exerts a beneficial influence on the history of philosophy. “It is thanks to it that both the test (*Prüfung*) of all most ancient philosophy in relation to its foundation and its historical presentation according to its true sense (*Sinn*) and spirit (*Geist*) have been extraordinarily facilitated. Until now, the historiographer succeeded only in characterising ancient philosophical systems but he could not make them completely comprehensible, either to himself or to others, since he was unable to clarify the foundation of their origin in the structure (*Anlagen*) of pure reason. Transcendental philosophy has revealed the sole fixed point of all authentic philosophising, starting from which it is possible to glimpse, in the nature of speculative reason, any possible errors and the occasion causing them” (*Gesch.*, VI, p. 635: cf. also *Entwurf*, pp. 182–183).

It seems, therefore, that the historiographer’s task is to characterise individual philosophical systems by means of historical information but also to take them in their true sense and true spirit. Buhle also insists on historical characterisation on other occasions. Of Bruno he writes: “We are sorry that we know so little, from the historical (*historisch*) point of view, about the events in Bruno’s education (*Bildung*) and his early studies. At the present state of affairs, we can partly explain the birth of his way of philosophising only psychologically (*psychologisch*), since his psychological personality is expressed very clearly and decisively in his writings, and partly on the basis of the facts that are available in his own works or can be inferred from them” (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 712–713). It is clear here that Buhle would like to have objective external data besides the subjective psychological elements. However, this historiographical objectivity, which he always tries to satisfy with

<sup>21</sup> The theorisation of the history of philosophy, as carried out above all by Heumann and Brucker, is called *histoire pragmatique* by Braun, pp. 89–137; on the concept of pragmatic history and the pragmatic method, cf. also above, pp. 536–537.

precision, is still not enough, or, rather, it would merely be an erudite objectivity if it were not understood in its deepest sense and spirit, by means of the possibility of placing it in a historical web (Kant's history of reason), which is based on the nature of rationality itself.

Here the most typical terms of the future hermeneutics come into play: *Verstehen*, *Sinn*, *Geist*. This alleged understanding – which, as we have said, is believed to lie deeper than mere characterisation through historical data – seems to be made possible by means of the capacity to trace systems back to the foundation of their origin, which does not lie in historical circumstances or in the thoughts of the single author, or his psychology, but “in the nature of speculative reason” or in the “structure of pure reason”. These two expressions which recur in the two passages cited from the *Geschichte* and the *Entwurf* refer to similar expressions used by Kant (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A 852 B 880) and mean retracing the systems of history back to an element that, one would say, is not historical, namely the nature of reason. In the *Entwurf* Buhle also adds that starting from the fixed point of transcendental philosophy, possible errors of speculative reason can already be noticed “*a priori*”.<sup>22</sup>

The system of transcendental philosophy, therefore, provides the possibility of explaining all the historical expressions of reason. Buhle repeats the stages in the “history of reason” outlined by Kant from three points of view: those of the object, the origin of pure cognitions, and the method. Thus, two types of historical cycles, one in antiquity, the other in the modern age, are broadly outlined. The former sees the conflict between empiricists and noologists, or between philosophers of sensitivity (*Sensualphilosophen*) and those of the ‘intellect’ (*Intellectualphilosophen*), a conflict that will terminate in Plato and Aristotle and gives rise to the scepticism of Sextus Empiricus. In the modern world the cycle is repeated, causing the antithesis between Locke on the one hand, and Leibniz-Wolff on the other, which then leads to Hume's scepticism. In the end, reason does not achieve its aim either with dogmatism or with scepticism: “only the critical method is left, and following this it [reason] can fulfil its ends” (*Entwurf*, §§ 248–251, pp. 182–185; *Gesch.*, VI, p. 635–637).

This, all things considered, is the lesson to be learnt from the “pragmatic” history of philosophy, and Buhle consigns it, as we shall see, to the vast volumes of his history, without being schematic and without applying strict, pre-construed formulae, even though, once we are aware of his Kantian position, we cannot fail to notice the underlying web, however fine the threads may be, which supports the rich, well-informed and basically objective historical account of thinkers throughout the centuries-old course of events. This web can also be perceived because here and there Buhle does not fail to make judgements which reveal how he wholly adheres to Kant's thought, even though they are conceived and expressed with due caution and broadness of mind and without excessive speculation. A critic of the first two

<sup>22</sup> *Entwurf*, § 248, p. 183. On the possibility of an *a priori* history of philosophy, for Kant and for J.C.A. Grohmann, cf. Micheli, *Kant storico della filosofia*, pp. 11–12, 247–254; see also above pp. 757–762 (Kant) and p. 779–780 (Grohmann).

volumes of the *Lehrbuch* pointed this out in his review<sup>23</sup>: one should not look at ancient philosophers too much through the lens of Kant's concepts (*durch das Glas kantischer Begriffe*) because one sees more than they said and attributes them thoughts that they did not have. Xenophanes, for example, is taken for a pantheist; the Pythagoreans think through concepts of matter and form, and so on. Buhle replied that through a Kantian lens it is possible to see ancient philosophy in greater depth.

Finally, we should point out another result made possible by an interpretation which presupposes an ideal history of reason, namely, the configuration of every period in the history of thought into a system, just like the whole course of historiography in its entirety. For Buhle there is the system of the great thinkers, but there is also the "Pythagorean system" and "Melancthon's philosophical system", just to give two examples. And Aristotle completed what there was left to do after Plato, that is, "the idea of a system". This category of the "system", needless to say, also comes from Kant, and does not really cause any great problems in Buhle because he knows how to use it with discretion, without imposing it. It remains a very broad idea that does not require strict organisation, and he does not force it upon his readers. It expresses, rather, the need to bring out the logic within every thought, which may become effective in history, remain latent, or indeed even be violated; yet this does not mean that it is not possible to speak of a systematic progression of human thought.

### 11.1.4 *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*

**11.1.4.1** The *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie und einer kritischen Literatur derselben* is divided as follows: VOL. I, part I (1796), 472 pp., comprises sections (*Abschnitte*) I–IX dealing with pre-Greek Barbarian philosophy, and section X, which covers part of Greek philosophy and epochs (*Epochen*) I–VII, that is up to Socrates and the Socratic schools, continued by Buhle up to the Epicureans and the Stoics. – VOL. II, part II (1797), 575 pp., continues section X with epoch VIII and the first part of epoch IX, that is to say, Plato and part of Aristotle. – VOL. III, part III (1798), 448 pp., is the continuation of section X, epoch IX (Aristotle), and also contains epochs X–XI (Greek philosophy up to Sextus Empiricus). – VOL. IV, part IV (1799), 511 pp., covers sections XI–XIV, from the philosophy of the Romans, which begins with Lucretius, up to "Alexandrian eclectic philosophy", that is Neoplatonism, including Augustine. – VOL. V, part V (1800), 708 pp., sections XVII and XVIII (first part) [sections XV and XVI are missing, even if this seems a mere enumeration error], from the philosophy of the Arabs to medieval philosophy, subdivided into

<sup>23</sup>In NADBibl., xxxv, 1 (1798), pp. 39–43; Buhle's reply in *Lehrbuch*, III, 'Anhang', final pp. (unnumbered) after p. 448.

three epochs. – VOL. VI, part VI, first half (1800), 415 pp., continues section XVIII with the third epoch of medieval philosophy; then sections XIX and XX (first part), which deal with the Renaissance up to Giordano Bruno. – VOL. VII, part VI, second half (1801), pp. 416–1063, continues section XX with the late Renaissance; then contains sections XXI–XXII, from Descartes to Leibniz and from Leibniz to Wolff. – VOL. VIII [erroneously numbered VII], part VII (1802), 722 pp., sections XXIII–XXIV, presents Wolff’s philosophy and philosophy in England in the eighteenth century. – VOL. IX, part VIII (1804), 920 pp., sections XXV–XXVI, treat philosophy in France and Germany from the middle to the end of eighteenth century to the end; the explanation of German philosophy extends well after Kant, dealing, in this order, with Schulze (*Aenesidemus*) and Maimon, Beck, Fichte (at great length), Bouterwek, Bardili, Schelling (philosophy of transcendental idealism and philosophy of nature), and Jacobi (cf. §§ 2216–2258, pp. 702–920). The last volume contains the index of authors’ names with a summary index of their thought (58 unnumbered pages) and an index of only the authors’ names (22 unnumbered pages).

Each section is preceded by the ‘Critical Literature’ (as announced in the very title of the work), subdivided into: *Quellen* (editions of the authors’ works); *Neuere Werke und Hilfsmittel* (general critical literature on the author); and at times *Abhandlungen* (monographs on some particular aspects of the author’s thought). Each volume is preceded by a brief ‘Vorrede’, with unnumbered pages (except for vol. VI). At the end of vol. III, there is an ‘Anhang’ (eight unnumbered pages in smaller print, with replies to the review by a critic of vols 1 and 2). All the material, subdivided into the 8 parts (*Theile*), the 26 sections (*Abschnitte*), some of which subdivided into epochs (*Epochen*), is in paragraphs successively numbered (in all 2,258 paragraphs).

The *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie seit der Epoche der Wiederherstellung der Wissenschaften* was published in Göttingen, “bey Johann Georg Rosenbusch’s Wittwe” (up to the first half of vol. II), and then, from the second half of vol. II to the end, “bey Johann Friedrich Röwer”. There are six volumes, which appeared from 1800 to 1805, and they constitute the sixth “partition” (*Abtheilung*) of the *Geschichte der Künste und Wissenschaften* [...] *von einer Gesellschaft gelehrter Männer ausgearbeitet*, of which we have already spoken. The following is a list of these volumes and a summary of their content:

VOL. I (1800), 896 pp., is an introduction (‘Einleitung’) to the whole work and summarises ancient and medieval philosophy in three sections (*Abschnitte*). Section I: the philosophy of the Greeks up to Sextus Empiricus. Section II: from just before the birth of Christ to medieval Scholasticism. Section III: medieval Scholasticism. – VOL. II, 968 pp., is subdivided, as are all the following ones, into two partitions (*Abtheilungen*): part I (1800), pp. 1–447, comprising Ch. I (*Hauptstück*): from the beginning of the fourteenth century to the Reformation; part II (1801), pp. 451–968, comprising Ch. II: the sixteenth century. – VOL. III, 696 pp., part I (1801), pp. 3–358, comprising the first section of Ch. III: the seventeenth century up to Leibniz (Descartes, Gassendi, Hobbes, Grotius, the Jesuits, Pascal, Huet, Glanvill); part II (1802), pp. 361–696, continues Ch. III: Cartesianism, Malebranche, Spinoza, English Platonism. – VOL. IV, 724 pp., part I (1803), pp. 1–438, comprising the first

section of Ch. IV: the eighteenth century up to Kant (Newton, Leibniz, Locke); part II (1803), pp. 441–724, continues Ch. IV: jusnaturalism, Pufendorf, Tschirnhausen, Ch. Thomasius, Wolff. – VOL. V, 768 pp., part I (1803), pp. 1–366, continues Ch. IV: the Wolffians, Berkeley, Hume and the other eighteenth-century British philosophers; part II (1804), pp. 369–768, continues Ch. IV: Priestley, theories of political economy in England. – VOL. VI, 772 pp., part I (1804), pp. 1–499, continues Ch. IV: still on English political theory; the French Enlightenment; part II (1805), pp. 500–772, contains the last section of Ch. IV (philosophy in Germany in the mid-eighteenth century) and Ch. V (critical philosophy up to his own time: Kant; briefly, Reinhold, Schulze, Maimon and Beck; at greater length, Fichte).

In sum, after the introduction, contained in the first volume, the work is divided in the other volumes into four long chapters (*Hauptstücke*), each of which embraces more or less a century: the 14th–15th, the 16th, the 17th, the 18th. The last chapter, the fifth one, is dedicated to Kant and the Kantians up to Fichte. There is no subdivision into brief paragraphs, unlike the *Lehrbuch*; every chapter is itself subdivided into long sections (*Abschnitte*). Each volume is preceded by a brief ‘Vorrede’, and the final one by the publisher’s ‘Vorbericht’ (Buhle was already in Russia when the volume appeared); volumes 2 and 3 also have a brief ‘Vorrede’ to their second partition.

Two translations were made of the *Geschichte*: the French *Histoire de la philosophie moderne* [...] précédée d’un abrégé de la philosophie ancienne, depuis Thalès jusqu’au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle, transl. A.J.L. Jourdan (Paris: F.I. Fournier, 1816), and the Italian *Storia della filosofia moderna dal risorgimento delle lettere sino a Kant*, transl. V. Lancetti (Milan: Tipografia di Commercio, 1821–1825, 12 vols). We shall say something about these two translations in due course.

There is just one brief comment to be made about the difference between the *Lehrbuch* and the *Geschichte*. The differences are merely extrinsic and quantitative. The *Lehrbuch*, which is a book for schools, albeit not exclusively, has a greater number of divisions in the subject matter, which is subdivided into numerous short, numbered paragraphs; the *Geschichte*, on the other hand, has no paragraphs, but each of the five, very long chapters is subdivided into lengthy sections, each of which, in turn, without any further subdivisions, embraces and expounds a relatively large topic. The *Geschichte* becomes, or seems to become, a wide-ranging history of modern thought, part of a great history “of arts and sciences” starting from the Renaissance, planned by the historians of the Göttingen school. When closely compared, the difference between the two works is a matter of length. The ancient world is far more extensively treated in the *Lehrbuch* than in the simple introduction to it included in the first volume of the *Geschichte*, whereas the modern age is more extensive in the latter than in the *Lehrbuch*. However, the approach and the structuring of the topics are identical; furthermore, several pages are identical, copied word for word from the *Lehrbuch* to the *Geschichte*. The difference in length is obtained simply by cutting out or adding parts, not by re-elaborating and re-writing the material. Despite everything, these are not two works but a single one, and we shall treat them as such, basing our account on the *Geschichte* and pointing out the few differences only when they occur.

**11.1.4.2** As far as periodization is concerned, both the *Lehrbuch* and the *Geschichte* use a form of division that had become common by that time: the three periods of ancient, medieval and modern philosophy. Ancient philosophy in the *Lehrbuch* also comprises the pre-Greek, or at least non-Greek, philosophies of the Egyptians, Hebrews, Phoenicians, Chaldeans, Persians, Hindustanis, Chinese, Celts and Scandinavians; the *Geschichte*, on the other hand, of which the first volume offers a summary of ancient thought, begins with the Greeks, because, properly speaking, “the oldest peoples had religions, not philosophy”, and it was only with the attempts on the part of the Greeks that “the history of philosophy as a science” really began (*Gesch.*, I, p. 14). Ancient philosophy also encompasses Christianity; however, before dealing with this, Buhle completes his account of Greek thought up to the end of Scepticism, considered without interruption from Pyrrho to Sextus Empiricus (who is placed in the second half of the second century A.D.); early Christianity (to Augustine and Boethius) is included in a chapter that comprises what he calls “Oriental philosophy”, the Hebrew thought of Philo and the sects (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Therapeutae) and all Greek Neoplatonism. In any case, in Buhle’s treatment Christian patristics is of no particular significance (except for Augustine).

What is of interest in the Middle Ages is essentially the philosophy of the Arabs and “Scholastic philosophy”, the latter being divided into three periods: from the Carolingian age (Scotus Eriugena) to Roscelin, from Roscelin to Albertus Magnus, and from Albertus Magnus to the rebirth of classical literature around the mid-fifteenth century. Nothing new is said in the section on the Middle Ages, which, as a whole, is essentially seen by Buhle in a negative light. The modern age begins with the “restoration of sciences”, that is to say with Humanism, starting as early as Petrarch, and then the fifteenth century, and it is the era of a progressive “Enlightenment” up to Kant and his immediate successors.

Within the great periodization of the three ages there are sub-periodizations, which respect other criteria and serve to articulate the course of history into shorter periods, or even to group together in some fashion philosophers and systems. The “ethnic” criterion (already present in Brucker’s work) predominates above all in the ancient world. Every section (*Abschnitt*) in the *Lehrbuch* bears in its title the name of a people. Needless to say, the section dedicated to the “philosophy of the Greeks” is the longest, taking up most of the first volume and all of the second and third, and it is subdivided into a series of no less than 11 eras. However, the sections concerning “peoples” continue with the philosophy of the Romans and that of the Hebrews at the time of Christ; after the Neoplatonist interruption, the criterion is picked up again with the philosophy of the Arabs, the first section of the Middle Ages. This ethnic criterion is found again in the *Geschichte*. Given the omission of the treatment of the philosophy of pre-Greek peoples, in this work it appears less significant; nonetheless, the *Geschichte* also takes up (cf. Brucker) the ethnic criterion (or rather, the criterion of geographical and cultural areas), applying it even to the modern age and making the distinction, in the very long treatment dedicated to the eighteenth century, between philosophy in England, France and Germany.

Furthermore, in the *Geschichte* (which, as we have said, is mainly dedicated to modern philosophy), a third criterion of sub-periodization, by centuries, prevails. The fifteenth century sees the rebirth of ancient philosophical systems; the sixteenth presents Aristotelianism but also the first manifestations of a thought that is independent of ancient thought; the seventeenth century produces the great modern systems (Descartes, Gassendi, Hobbes, Malebranche, Spinoza); finally, the important eighteenth century, preceded by a glance at the results obtained by philosophy in various countries, includes the figures of Leibniz, Wolff and Locke and narrates the events in the English, French and German Enlightenment on a wide scale.<sup>24</sup>

**11.1.4.3** Kant had considered the Greeks to be the true initiators of philosophy because all the peoples before them had thought solely through images (*durch Bilder*) and the Greeks were the first to begin representing things through concepts (*durch Begriffe*).<sup>25</sup> Buhle thus seems to be one step behind Kant because he goes back to dealing with Barbarian and pre-Greek philosophy almost in the same way as Brucker. In truth, this happens fairly extensively only in the *Lehrbuch*, and not in the introductory volume to the *Geschichte*; for Buhle the problem is controversial and he does not dismiss Kant's innovative standpoint. If the opportunity that led to the rise of philosophy is to be found solely in the disposition of reason to give a satisfactory answer to the question "of the ultimate foundation of things, of the ultimate foundation of knowledge, of the supreme unconditioned cause of everything that is, of man's destination, hope, duties and rights", then one cannot say "with any certainty whether, and among which people, for the first time man happened to pass from the state of boorishness to that of culture. Therefore, it is not possible, either, to decide historically with any certainty which people was the first to be capable of philosophising" (*Lehr.*, I, pp. 11 and 13).

For Buhle, therefore, more than for Kant, the question concerning the beginning of philosophy was a historical question, which can not be answered because the necessary elements are lacking. "There may have been an original people (*Urvolk*) from whom the first sparks of philosophical light emerged; [...] yet historians are hardly likely to agree on which people, or peoples, can be awarded this honour, because the information [...] is fragmentary, uncertain, and contradictory" (*Lehr.*, I, p. 14). This is the reason why once again in the *Lehrbuch* Buhle follows the old path of Middle-Eastern, pre-Greek civilisations. However, only the Greeks, in the final analysis, freed themselves from the ties with popular religion and rose above

<sup>24</sup>It should be mentioned that a reviewer in the ALZ, no. 196 (13th July, 1802), pp. 89–94, finds the division of the *Geschichte* into centuries unsatisfactory and complains about the lack of a periodization that would be "better suited to the purpose" (pp. 93–94).

<sup>25</sup>I. Kant, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, in Id., *Vorlesungen über die Metaphysik*, ed. K.H.L. Pölit (Erfurt, 1821), p. 8: "No people had properly begun to philosophize before the Greeks; everything previously had been represented by images, and nothing by concepts" (see Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Akademie Ausgabe, XXVIII, p. 535<sup>14–16</sup>); see also Kant, *Logik Jäsche* [1800], Akademie Ausgabe, IX, p. 27<sup>15–20</sup> (see above, pp. 728–730).

the level of the senses. “Their considerations progressed from the principles of the world of phenomena that lay close at hand [...] to a free and autonomous way of philosophising that was independent of religious belief and not infrequently directed against this very belief” (*Gesch.*, I, p. 14).

Actually, in his *Geschichte des philosophirenden menschlichen Verstandes*, written some years earlier (1793), Buhle had already discussed at length the question of the existence of an *Urvolk* to which the invention of philosophy could be traced back, also paying great attention to the anthropological aspects of the problem.<sup>26</sup> In that work, he is sceptical about the possibility of solving the problem, due to the lack of reliable facts. However, he maintains that philosophy had begun in the moment when man had reflected upon himself and the world around him, which is why it was a late product of civilisation, when man freed himself from a situation of need and poverty in his primitive state through the invention of the arts, agriculture, and industry (pp. 15–34). Even if one concedes, continues Buhle, that in the most ancient times the Egyptians were the first people to reach a high level of civilisation, it is impossible to decide with any proof whether their culture was novel and original or whether it represented the growth of shoots from seeds that were imported into Egypt by earlier settlers (pp. 35–36). Buhle raises many objections to Plessing, a staunch and scholarly supporter of the theory of the originality of Egyptian culture and hence of the birth of philosophy on the banks of the Nile,<sup>27</sup> and refused to side either with those who denied the importance of the Egyptians’ religion, philosophy, and scientific knowledge, to whom “the Muse of Greek wisdom owed nothing at all”, or with those who made the Egyptians “the masters not only of the greatest Greek philosophers but also, and moreover directly, of the entire Orient” (pp. 49–50). Buhle describes the Egyptian astral religion in detail, obtaining his information from the great scholar of Herodotus, Gatterer. Yet in the end, when he has to move on to the “philosophy” of the Egyptians, he concludes: “The religion of the Egyptians, as I have hitherto described it, also became their philosophy concerning the cause of the world”. “Pythagoras, Eudoxus, and Plato were able to use the Egyptians for their other arts and sciences”, politics, architecture, agriculture, mathematics, and astronomy; travellers to Egypt could also gain much from the mysteries of their priests; “but through these acquisitions they were not introduced into the

<sup>26</sup>Cf. *Gesch. des philosoph. mensch. Verstandes*, pp. 22–23, footnote, where one can find an extensive overview of erudite eighteenth-century literature on the subject. Among others: J.S. Bailly, *Lettres sur l’origine des sciences et sur celle des peuples* (London and Paris, 1777); Id., *Lettres sur l’Atlantide de Platon* (London and Paris, 1779) (on these works cf. above, Chap. 2, Introd., p. 85); A. Court de Gébelin, *Monde primitif analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne* (Paris, 1773–1782), 9 vols; Abbé Delille, *Origine des premières sociétés* (Amsterdam, 1770); P.S. Pallas, *Observations sur la formation des montagnes* (St. Pétersbourg, 1777); C. von Linné, *Necessitas historiae naturalis Rossiae*, in Id., *Dissertationes variae*, t. VII, diss. CXLVIII, II ed. (Erlangen, 1789); furthermore, contributions from the Göttingen expert Ch.G. Heyne, *Opuscula academica* (Göttingen, 1785–1812).

<sup>27</sup>Cf. *Gesch. des philosoph. mensch. Verstandes*, pp. 30 and 36, where the work by F.V.L. Plessing, *Memnonium oder Versuche zur Enthüllung der Geheimnisse des Altertums* (Leipzig, 1787), is cited (on Plessing see, above, pp. 651 and 740–742).



profundities of a metaphysics" (pp. 79–81). Moving on from the Egyptians to the Greeks, Buhle states: "Those systems of a profoundly-thought philosophy, those ideals of art, of which the Greek Muse was supreme, were not imported to the Hellenics by foreigners but were the work of their own creative genius, whose power was merely set in motion by an impulse from abroad" (pp. 111–112).

Despite concessions to knowledge in the Middle East, in particular to that of the Egyptians, Buhle maintains, therefore, the Kantian theory of the Greek origin of philosophy. It is a new theory, but the ethnological and archeological investigation that was rediscovering Egypt was also new, and the dialectic tension that these studies aroused in relation to neoclassicism and the flourishing classical philology in Germany, not to mention its relationship with the historical origins of philosophy, was also new. Be that as it may, another of Buhle's convictions is that the earliest origin of philosophy is to be sought in religions, as we have just seen in the case of the Egyptians (*Lehr.*, I, pp. 134–141; *Gesch.*, I, pp. 9–15). In fact, for Buhle religion seems to be a constant aspect of the history of human culture because it presents, in different forms, the basic problems of the human soul. "The first work of reason is a religion for man as a sensible creature; the last of its works is a religion for man as a free intelligence. The latter religion is the result of a philosophy brought to fulfilment; this, in the history of the human spirit, is what precedes every philosophy in general" (*Gesch.*, I, pp. 14–15).

The history of Greek philosophy, considered in its overall development and even in single periods, seems to describe a kind of cycle or course (which recalls Vico, we would say, but Vico was unknown to Buhle, who took this theme of the cycle from Kant's 'history of reason'). Plato's "system" is based on a "main idea" (*Hauptidee*), that is to say that philosophy is the science of what may be thought to be sound and stable in beings, the "object of a pure rational knowledge" (*Gesch.*, I, pp. 155–156). Kant would have thus termed him a great 'noologist'. Aristotle, on the other hand, is an empiricist, but of an empiricism without critical reason, where "dogmatism reached the highest level of fulfilment" (I, p. 414). Their conflict gave rise to Scepticism, which concluded the course of Greek philosophy. After Aristotle, the Epicureans, Stoics, and Peripatetics, quarrelling with each other, represent a negative dogmatism, while from Plato's Academy there emerged a Scepticism which, from Pyrrho to Sextus Empiricus, represents "the result of ancient philosophising" in the absence of criticism (I, p. 428). Broadly speaking, therefore, one senses the completion of a cycle. Yet this does not prevent Buhle from recognising differences and imbalances that rupture his pre-established scheme, paying attention to the effective reality of the history of thought.

The great ancient cycle seems to repeat itself in smaller cycles within it. Thus, for example, from Thales to the Sophists events run a similar course, albeit in different terms. It starts when the beginning of things is located in matter, in a system of materialism (both with the Ionics and then the Atomists), while with the Pythagoreans, and far more clearly with the Eleatics, the search for an explanation of the sensible world by means of a rational principle emerges. In any case, excluding the Eleatics, pre-Socratic physics "always pondered about the domain of experience, not the domain of the supersensible", and thus suffered from the conflict between the

needs of experience and the needs of pure reason; hence, “the deception of logical appearance could hardly be perceived, or at least because of scepticism it was not very attractive or reassuring” (*Gesch.*, I, p. 73). Hence emerged the Sophists with their need for a logic that could clarify problems better than Zeno had done. He had arrived at the idea of dialectics. With the Sophists, dialectics turned into sophistry, and their scepticism swept away not only popular religion but also the foundations of morals (I, p. 76; cf., for the complicated shift from physics to Sophist scepticism, pp. 71–87). The cycle, from dogmatism to scepticism, without the solution of criticism, is also underlined here by the more precise application of Kantian concepts: the lack of any clear distinction between sensible and supersensible; the surfacing of a dialectical conflict, which ends up in scepticism because of a lack of critical principles. The cyclic course of events of classical thought is repeated with the rebirth of Antiquity at the outset of the modern age. From the fifteenth to the sixteenth century, the renewed conflict between Platonists and Aristotelians turns into the sceptical currents of the late sixteenth century: Platonism (Ficino), pure Peripateticism (but also Stoicism and other ancient philosophies), ending up in Montaigne’s scepticism, besides which, with Bacon we see an appeal to scientific truth based on experience, and then, in a highly original way, the modern course begins that will lead to Kant’s clarifying criticism (II, pp. 904 and 950). In these historiographical theories of Buhle’s we thus have an example of the hermeneutical application of Kant’s criticism.

Let us now briefly examine Greek thought, whose most prominent features are Plato and Aristotle, and the final period of Scepticism. Buhle is convinced that the most recent studies on Plato have pronounced a clear, definitive verdict on his philosophy<sup>28</sup>; on the other hand, he believes that there is still much work to be carried out on Aristotle. As we have seen, he himself did much to contribute to this.

Plato’s thought “later had an incomparably greater influence on the world than that of any other” (*Gesch.*, I, p. 150). But who was Plato? In the *Geschichte*, after a brief biography (pp. 150–154), Buhle comes to the question of Plato’s ‘system’ which is important for him since it provides the possibility of expounding a corpus of doctrines as a coherent whole that can be attributed to Plato and not to a generic “Platonism”. He maintains that, despite the lack of an external systematic form, a logically ordered explanation can be given for certain topics that “depend on one principle”, and that there is one main idea (*Hauptidee*) to which all the elements of Platonic thought are subordinate. Plato’s main idea is his very concept of philosophy: the “science of what in things can be considered sound and stable, and thus the object of pure, rational knowledge”. Other methodological principles propounded by Buhle are as follows: not all the dialogues are of equal importance;

<sup>28</sup> He refers to the works by D. Tiedemann, *Dialogorum Platonis argumenta exposita et illustrata* (Zweibrücken, 1786); W.G. Tennemann, *System der Platonischen Philosophie* (Leipzig, 1792–1795); J.J. Engel, *Versuch einer Methode, die Vernunftlehre aus platonischen Dialogen zu entwickeln* (Berlin, 1780); J.C.S. von Morgenstern, *De Platonis Republica commentationes tres* (Halle, 1794); see also the extensive bibliography that Buhle gives in the foreword to the chapter on Plato in the *Lehr.*, II, pp. 3–16.

Plato's own thoughts are contained in the later dialogues, which we can date more precisely; it is not always clear which character is given the task of expounding Plato's ideas, although it can often be fairly safely intuited with the help of historical testimony, above all Aristotle; and the dialogues of pure debate without a conclusion mean that Plato himself did not intend to decide and reach a conclusion (I, pp. 155–157).

Having said this, Buhle's exposition, both in the *Lehrbuch* and in the *Geschichte* (with the less important parts in more succinct form), follows this order of themes: opinion and science, and cognitive faculties (*Gesch.*, I, pp. 160–169); ideas, dialectics and the “thing in itself” (I, pp. 169–190); matter and the world of corporeal things (I, pp. 190–194); the nature of the soul, immortality and pre-existence (I, pp. 194–203); the divinity and theology (I, pp. 203–207); moral philosophy (I, pp. 207–228); politics (I, pp. 228–247); the education of children (I, pp. 247–249); and beauty (I, pp. 249–252). That the themes are set out according to Kantian systematics is immediately obvious, though Buhle does not stress or overemphasise this: a theoretical part and a practical part, the former beginning with a kind of criticism of knowledge and ending with the themes of metaphysics (the ontology of ideas, cosmology, the soul, and theology).

Of the themes present, that which concerns ideas, “the most important doctrine in Platonic philosophy”, is of some interest. “That Plato deduces the possibility of thinking from ideas [...] is not the only point of view from which ideas may be considered, although this point of view is already interesting enough in and for itself [...]. Plato's doctrine of ideas must also be investigated from a metaphysical point of view. He assumed them as the explanatory principle not only of thinking (*das Denken*) but also of knowing (*das Erkennen*) and hoped by means of them to reach a conclusion concerning the contrast between sensible experience and pure understanding” (*Gesch.*, I, p. 169). This is the first point on which Buhle insists. The second is that ideas are not “a hypostatized ideal world”, as some modern scholars maintain, but “they are granted reality since they are represented by a reason” (p. 174). In fact, Plato discovered ideas by analysing cognitive faculties; if he calls them substances, he does so because they are determined by real notes, thought by reason; ideas are in the divine mind, which is the modeller of matter on the basis of ideas themselves; finally, it is in relation to ideas that concrete things have reality. These are the basic reasons used to negate that ideas are a hypostatized reality in themselves.

Buhle thus denies that the Platonic world of ideas has a purely cognitive function, maintaining, on the contrary, its metaphysical dimension; however, this metaphysical function is exercised not by an ideal reality, taken in itself, separate from any reference either to the mind or to what is real in the world. The doctrine of ideas is examined, in particular, in the *Parmenides*, where Plato himself raises a series of objections, to which he then replies. As well as being the basis of knowledge and dialectics, ideas are also the foundation of ontology since they are the expression of the more general properties of the thing (*das Ding*). In this sense ideas represent the “thing in itself” (*das Ding an sich*), which for Plato, according to Buhle, is in the infinite eternity of time, while the phenomena that constitute the

sensible world are in finite time, the mobile image of the eternal. In this way Plato's ontological conception overcomes the contradiction between the materialism of the oldest philosophical sects and the spiritualism of the Eleatics.

At the end of his account of Plato's thought, Buhle sums up Plato's merits as regards philosophy as a general science with the following verdicts. In the first place, he elaborated a concept of philosophy and its problems that was clearer than that of his predecessors. Secondly, he devoted himself equally intensely to theoretical interests and, like the good Socratic that he was, to the practical interests of man. Thirdly, he was one of the first to distinguish the accidental and changing from the stable and lasting and to seek a link between pure philosophy and empirical philosophy. In the fourth place, reason alone is the faculty of principles for the knowledge of the thing in itself (the faculty of ideas), while perception of changing and accidental features is entrusted to the senses; in order then to establish an agreement between ideas and objects, it is necessary to turn to the one and only cause that lies at its foundations, which is divine reason. For Buhle, the last point is decisive in Plato's philosophy and is what makes it so characteristic.

It cannot escape our notice how this characterisation is expressed, once again, in terms of a Kantian problem: that of the agreement between the formal *a priori* moment and the empirical moment of the content of knowledge, which Kant resolves in the intricate problem of transcendental deduction, but without any reference to a spiritual reality. Plato's solution, which has recourse to the mediation of God's reason, is evidently dogmatic for Buhle, and Plato can thus be likened, in his need for divine intervention, to Descartes, Malebranche, Leibniz, and to that sector of modern thought that Kant accuses of dogmatism. Hence we can understand the final judgement where Buhle distinguishes his consideration of the above-mentioned merits whereby Plato represents a considerable step forward (*Fortschritt*) on the part of philosophising reason towards the "shrine to truth, good and beauty", from his assessment of its objective importance: "if one considers Platonism in relation to its objective scientific value, then it must be accused of very essential shortcomings and, taken as a whole, it must be considered an unsuccessful system" (*Gesch.*, I, p. 254; the verdict is identical in the *Lehr.*, II, pp. 271–275). Here, then, are the failings: it remains to be demonstrated that reason is the source of the knowledge of the thing in itself. Even if one concedes that ideas are the principles of knowledge, there is no guideline (*ein Leitfaden*) or rule for determining them completely. Plato rightly distinguished the faculties of representing, wanting, and feeling, but he did not then go into an analysis of each of them sufficiently, determining their limitations, nor was he capable of describing precisely their conditions and reciprocal relationships. These objections, as we can see, are also typically Kantian. The distinction between a historical judgement and a historical-theoretical judgement, if one may call it such, is in any case important. As far as the former is concerned, Buhle can attribute Plato with a decisive role in the history of philosophy; as for the latter, he can also express a value judgement concerning the objective conquest of the science of philosophy, which seems to derive ultimately from Kant.

However, Buhle's greatest contribution to ancient historiography, as he himself was aware, consists in the chapters on Aristotle (*Gesch.*, I, pp. 255–423; *Lehr.*, II,

pp. 294–573; III, pp. 3–258), as well as his editions of Aristotle and other minor historiographical contributions on the Stagirite. Buhle is to be credited with having brought Aristotelian studies back to a direct reading of the original works and with having placed the interpretation of them in the field of a precise knowledge of the history of their interpretation and reception. This does not mean that he rejected all the contributions that came from the school tradition; nonetheless, with Buhle a new interpretative model was in the making in the field of Kantianism, a model that was destined to foster a different interpretation of Aristotle. The narrative again follows a systemacity that adapts the prevailing forms of the Aristotelian tradition to those of Kant. Aristotle completed “the idea of the system” that had already emerged in Plato (*Gesch.*, I, pp. 259–264), hence the great division into theoretical and practical philosophy: the former is subdivided into physics, mathematics, and the cognitions based on reason (ontology and theology); the latter is subdivided into technology and the doctrine of actions (ethics, politics, and economics). This all presupposes thought with its laws, hence the logic in the *Organon*.

However, despite having used this structure of Aristotle’s system as a premise, Buhle then proceeds to an exposition that partly follows a different perspective. He starts with the psychology of the cognitive faculties (from *De anima*) and with the *Organon*, considered as a kind of “critical propedeutic” to the system. This is perhaps the most interesting element in Buhle’s interpretation: “For the discovery and founding of the principles of his philosophy, Aristotle did not start out from a criticism of the faculties of knowledge [ . . . ]. Yet he very diligently enquired into the properties of the cognitive faculty in itself, and into the original relationship it has with objects; and it is clear that his whole philosophical system, just like the gap that separates it from other systems, for example from that of Plato, rests on the results of this enquiry and presupposes it. This criticism of his is related not only to logical thought [the *Organon*] but also to knowing in general [the soul’s cognitive faculties in *De anima*]. That no attention hitherto has been paid to this criticism partly depends on the fact that Aristotelian philosophy has not been studied in relation to its sources, and that Aristotle was considered more as a historian and critic of the earlier philosophical systems than as an original thinker; Aristotle himself is partly to blame for this since he considered and dealt with that criticism not as propedeutic to scientific philosophy, able to stand on its own, but as a part of it (i.e., of psychology); therefore, he was not credited with any other propedeutic research other than that contained in the *Organon*” (I, pp. 264–265).

Buhle thus expresses typically Kantian demands, traces of which he presumes were already to be found in Aristotle: the need for a criticism prior to the solution of philosophical problems; the distinction between propaedeutics and system, between logic of pure thought and logic of knowledge, that is, one might say, between formal logic and transcendental logic. Buhle begins his account of the Aristotelian system, therefore, with the doctrines of sensations, common sense, the imagination, the understanding and, finally, the will, following the contents of books II and III of the *De anima*. The tortuous text on the understanding is interpreted in the sense that the passive is assumed to correspond to the Kantian *understanding* (*Verstand*), taken in the strictest sense, while the active is taken to represent *reason* (*Vernunft*),

or also the faculty of principles and unification on the highest level; it is “intellectual spontaneity”, with respect to the closest links with experience and sense, held by the passive understanding.

The account of Aristotle’s thought then continues with an examination of the *Organon*, starting with the *Categories*, where the comparison between Aristotle and Kant becomes even more explicit (I, pp. 282–286), and then moves on to a detailed, precise explanation of the *Physics* and the *De caelo*, to arrive at metaphysics. Here the doctrine of being *qua* being is set out clearly in connection with the ontology elaborated by Wolff and the German university tradition; this is followed by the “theology” of the unmoved mover, which Buhle then follows with psychology, going back to *De anima* for the parts concerning the definition of the soul as form and the articulation of its biological and intellectual properties, which in the end lead to some considerations on immortality. According to Buhle, for Aristotle “the soul exists after death not with the consciousness of its own person (*mit Bewußtsein ihrer Person*), not as an individual, but as the absolute spark (*Funken*) of the divinity, a spark that, on coming into contact with a new animal body (*mit einem neuen thierischen menschlichen Körper*), makes it a rational man (*einer vernünftige Menschen*), without man remembering his previous life” (I, pp. 355–356).<sup>29</sup>

The exposition of practical philosophy, ethics, politics, and economics is also wide-ranging (I, pp. 356–414), but they are, in Buhle’s opinion, the least valid aspects of Aristotle’s system. His impulse led him towards the empirical and “he always thought only of what men usually do and are, too infrequently of what they should (*sollten*) do and be [...]. He was, therefore, ironic about Plato’s republic” (I, p. 421). Yet, for our aims, the final verdict on the Aristotelian “system” is interesting (*Gesch.*, I, pp. 414–423; *Lehr.*, III, § 406, pp. 237–248). “In Greece dogmatic philosophy reached its highest degree through Aristotle; and it stopped there; none of Aristotle’s successors contributed as much as he did to the extension or perfecting of such philosophy; only single parts of it were re-elaborated, with the acquisition at times of truth, at times of errors; and if the history of modern times includes a greater number of creators of philosophical systems, it will, however, not boast anyone comparable to Aristotle for the contribution he made to philosophy as the foundation of a dogmatism” (*Gesch.*, I, p. 414).

The merits of Aristotle that Buhle acknowledges can thus be summed up as follows. He made thought attain a systematic form. He was the founder of logic. He revealed effectively the errors of the philosophers who preceded him; of the dogmatic systems, Aristotle’s is the best for the close links between metaphysics and physics and for having kept reason within the field of experience, for its critical structure even if it is on a psychological basis, for his aversion to Platonic idealism and “enthusiasm”, even if his rejection of the *a priori* is too radical, since the

<sup>29</sup>Buhle seems to support a similar theory in *Ueber Ursprung und Leben*, where the Aristotelian conception of the soul is frequently cited positively (pp. 37, 52, and 151); however, the doctrine of the *nous* seems to Buhle to lead Aristotle to maintain the immortality of the soul in one sense but in another sense to deny it (*Ueber Ursprung*, p. 151).

difference between pure knowledge and empirical knowledge was not clear to him. Aristotle sought a middle way, tempering with experience and with an appeal to facts what in Plato was idealistic and enthusiastic (*das Schwärmerische*), and what in the Stoics' virtue was exaltation. On the other hand, however, he looked too much at man's actual being and neglected what he ought to be. Buhle also finds Aristotle commendable for his natural science (animal physiology, and so on) and for the theory of taste in the treatises concerning rhetoric and poetics.

The progress of ancient philosophy came to a halt with Aristotle. After him only scepticism is dealt with at length by Buhle, from Academic scepticism to Pyrrho, Timon and Sextus Empiricus. He gives an extensive account of the contents both of the *Pyrrhonian hypotyposes* and of the *Contra mathematicos*. He lingers on Sextus in order to show the difficulties and criticisms that the sceptic aims at dogmatism, above all in the field of so-called physics, starting with the theological concept of the active principle, identified as the forces of the gods, to move on to the concepts, more properly pertaining to physics, of cause, the whole and parts, the body, space, motion, time, number, birth and death.

The sceptical period represents a crisis in ancient thought and the end of a cycle. However, a new age had already begun a few centuries earlier with the birth of Christ. The novelty of Christianity is seen by Buhle within the history of the philosophical culture of the time. He pays some attention to Roman philosophy shortly before Christ (Cicero, Lucretius) and shortly after (Seneca, Marcus Aurelius), to then deal more fully with the question of so-called "Oriental philosophy", that is, whether there had been any thought independent of both the Greeks' Western thought and of that of Judaism and Christianity: the thought of Zoroaster, for example, and of others in Persia and in the Near East. Brucker had maintained this, as had Mosheim before him; so had Walch more recently in Göttingen. Nonetheless, writes Buhle, the basis for their theory lacked documentation and was unreliable; by contrast, at the time, any specific Oriental philosophy was denied by Meiners and Tiedemann, with whom Buhle was in agreement.<sup>30</sup>

Buhle's theory is that thought in the Near East was mixed with Hebrew and Christian thought, besides that of the Greeks, and philosophy in the final centuries of the ancient world was constituted by this "amalgam" (*Gesch.*, I, pp. 590–591). He has no sympathy for such syncretism, yet he feels a certain attraction to it. He is attracted above all by the concept of Hebrew Essenes (I, pp. 614–617), in the purity of their moral conduct and their community life, on which he feels that Christ's

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<sup>30</sup>Cf. *Gesch.*, I, pp. 592–595: supporters of the existence of "Eastern philosophy" were J.L. von Mosheim, *Dissertationum ad historiam ecclesiasticam pertinentium volumen*, III ed. (Altona and Lubeck, 1767), and, above all, Brucker, II, Ch. III: 'De philosophia orientali', pp. 639–652 and VI, 'Appendix', pp. 400–418; adversaries, on the contrary, were Ch. Meiners, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Weltweisheit* (Lemgo, 1786), p. 160, and D. Tiedemann, *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie* (Marburg, 1791–1797), III, pp. 96–101. On the exclusion of African and Oriental peoples from the history of philosophy in the historiography of the late Enlightenment (from Meiners onwards), including that of Kantian inspiration, cf. P.K.J. Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy* (Albany, 2013), pp. 11–29 and 69–95.

doctrine was based. Considered not as he is presented in Christian positive religion but as a historic human being, Christ appears to be a “wise Hebrew, dedicated profoundly to the religious needs of his time” (I, p. 619); and Buhle outlines his doctrine solely as a sublime moral and humanitarian conception.

Despite his deep dislike of Neoplatonism, Buhle dwells at length on Plotinus’ *Enneads* (I, pp. 670–752): “Although Alexandrine rational fantasising is revealed in its clearest form in the works of Plotinus, these works still preserve several hints of a very acute mind, which dedicated all the strength of [its] spirit to founding and discovering theoretically what a man at least feels forced to believe through his practical rule. Plotinus’ philosophy is the model for a transcendent philosophy and, in a certain sense, is sublime and instructive, even if the doctrine taught leads to a wholly negative gain for a healthy reason aware of its own limitations” (I, pp. 670–71). For his account of Plotinus Buhle declares he is mostly indebted to Tiedemann, who had explained Plotinus and provided a full summary of his works, complete with his own reasoning,<sup>31</sup> and he concludes with this verdict: “Plotinus’ system, as we can see, leads to Spinozism”, with certain incongruities, however, that we do not find in Spinoza, such as substantializing phenomena and intellectualizing them, without distinguishing clearly between empirical and pure thought (I, pp. 752–53, note). Here we can sense the religious and idealistic interpretation of Spinoza and his Neoplatonism, following the *Pantheismusstreit* of the time in Germany; however, Buhle stops at Kant and his “Enlightenment” without regarding the contemporary perspectives, again Neoplatonic, of Fichte and Schelling of which he had undoubtedly heard.

Christian patristic thought (restricted almost exclusively to Augustine, however) is set out within the account of Neoplatonism and is not emphasised particularly but preceded merely by an observation on the reason why Christianity came into conflict with Greek philosophy whereas pagan religions did not. The reason is that Christians draw their knowledge from a source that is not reason but faith; they hence became intolerant and authoritarian and, in the end, violently repressed the pagan religions (I, pp. 769–774).

One can also sense a traditional attitude in Buhle’s assessment of medieval thought, which was judged adversely and negatively. After a positive treatment of the culture of the Arabs, contrasted with the decline of the Byzantines, the only great figure Buhle finds in the West is Scotus Eriugena, with whom “Scholastic philosophy” or that of the schools began, subdivided into the three periods of traditional historiography. Polemicising with Heeren,<sup>32</sup> who thought the West had been influenced directly by Greek Aristotelian thought by means of the Byzantines, without Arab mediation, Buhle believes that this is true only for part of the *Organon*, while physics, metaphysics, and Aristotelian natural history only became known

<sup>31</sup>Cfr. Tiedemann, *Geist der spekulativen Philosophie*, III, pp. 263–433.

<sup>32</sup>A.H.L. Heeren, *Geschichte des Studiums der classischen Literatur seit dem Wiederaufleben der Wissenschaften* (Göttingen, 1796) (it is the 4th section of his *Geschichte der Künste*), I, p. 183 (quoted by Buhle).



in the West from the twelfth century and from the Arabs. “Thomas’ basic merit lies in the fact that by means of doctrine and writings he promoted the spread and clarification of Aristotle’s philosophy”. Aquinas was indeed the Scholastic *par excellence*, and it is to him that we owe the explanation of certain ontological concepts: thing (*Ding*), matter, form, and the principle of individuation (Buhle is referring above all to *De ente et essentia*); and “his rational theology received a more precise characterisation since, to a certain extent, it is the basis for the philosophical theology of later Scholastics and, even today, is held in great esteem by the Catholic Church” (I, pp. 860–861).

Buhle pays much attention to modern philosophy, from the Renaissance to his own times. Of the nine books of the *Lehrbuch*, it takes up the last four; in the *Geschichte*, which is entirely devoted to modern thought, except for the first volume which is introductory and sums up ancient and medieval thought, the modern age occupies the whole of the other five volumes of the vast work. However, the modern age cannot be comprehended without the ancient; the immediate premise lies in the rebirth of the ancient thought after the long barbaric interval of the Middle Ages. “In general, it is a case of a lethargy, into which the human spirit fell during the Middle Ages, under the ruins of the greatness of Rome and the coarseness of those who had destroyed it, under the oppression of a religion that was expressed in obscure superstitions and under a monastic despotism that surpassed all limitations; this lethargy separates ancient literature, and also ancient philosophy, from the new” (I, pp. 3–4).

Buhle frequently uses similar expressions to describe the Middle Ages. We can note his negative opinion not only of the uncivilised culture of the men of the time, often called barbaric and quibbling, but also of the nature of the political-religious environment: the Catholic religion is seen as superstition; monasticism (elsewhere he often says “the papacy”) is dominant and consists in an unlimited despotism. In these judgements Buhle repeats Heumann, Brucker, and Kant. Also like them, he takes Modernity to be the age of political and economic freedom, of reform and purification in religion, in addition to the rebirth of fine arts, original philosophical systems, and good taste. Ancient philosophy plays the role of being for modernity “propedeutic to personal, independent research” (I, p. 7). Even Descartes, who is rightly considered to be the founder of a new philosophical system in the modern age, had had equally original thinkers as his forerunners in the sixteenth century, and his very originality “was based on the state of philosophy as he knew it, on the study he made of his nearest predecessors and of Greek systems, of which his skepsis was the first result” (I, ‘Vorrede’, p. VII).

The Renaissance, that is to say, the age of the “restoration of the sciences” (*Wiederherstellung der Wissenschaften*), lasts from the mid-fourteenth to the sixteenth century, from Petrarca to Bruno and Bacon. It had the function of being directly introductory to modern thought, with the rebirth of Plato and Aristotle’s systems, discussions on them and their decline as the premise for the philosophical novelty of the moderns. The Renaissance almost repeats, on a smaller scale, the great cycle of ancient thought: Platonism, Aristotelianism (and other systems) and, from the conflict between them, the scepticism of Montaigne and the late

Renaissance. “Just as the many vain attempts of dogmatic philosophers of this time have revitalised scepticism, so they offered the opportunity to bar completely the way that everyone until then had followed to attain scientific truth, i.e., by means of pure *reasoning*, and rather to question *experience*, requiring it to provide scientific teaching offered either immediately or by means of observations made for this purpose” (II, p. 950). Actually, maintains Buhle, this is precisely Bacon’s background.

Moreover, for Buhle it was in the Renaissance that the movement of cultural enlightenment, the *Aufklärung*, so characteristic of modernity, had already begun. He therefore dwells at length over determining its “causes” once and for all, that is, for the whole course of modernity, since modernity has its roots in this crucial period. First there are the general causes (*Von den allgemeinen Ursachen*): “There were many causes in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries that partly prepared and promoted the restoration of the sciences and partly contributed to their furtherance and their general action. The first and most important to be mentioned is the rise of a free bourgeoisie in the towns (*eines freyen Bürgerstandes in Städten*), which constituted an intermediate level between the aristocracy and the free peasants” (II, p. 6). This free middle class seems to be for Buhle, as it was for Heumann (*Models*, II, p. 413–414) and Kant (see above, pp. 706, 726–729), not only a general cause but even the only cause, encompassing all the others that he lists and analyses, namely the development of the study of natural sciences, medicine and mathematics, necessary for bourgeois work; hence also the rise of a cultured class of laymen that broke up the religious monopoly of education; the promotion of frequent relationships with the East, thus creating access to scientific knowledge; the rebirth of the study of Roman law; and in general, the development of scientific culture in lieu of that of theology (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 6–9).

It must be said, however, that Buhle does not repeat or return to this sociological approach to the question in other situations; thus, these statements remain more a kind of commonplace than a true historiographical category explaining further historical developments. Other circumstances that favoured the Renaissance were, for Buhle, the Crusades, the struggles against medieval ecclesiastic despotism and the hierarchical organisation of society, weariness with the philosophical subtleties of Scholasticism, the diffusion of a taste for poetry in the vernacular tongues, the arrival of the Greeks in Italy, and the invention of printing. He dwells at length on the rebirth of classical literature and on the dissemination of a knowledge of Greek (II, pp. 23–86), following many of Heeren’s indications<sup>33</sup>; in particular, he dedicates a whole chapter to the *Philosophie des Lebens*, that is to Petrarca’s moral philosophy (II, pp. 86–119), quoting at length from his Latin works (*Rerum memorandarum*, *De remediis*, *De vita solitaria*, *De ignorantia*, *De vera sapientia* [Buhle is not aware of the fact that this is a pseudo-Petrarchan work]).

Let us now take a look at Buhle’s treatment of the Renaissance as a whole. It is distributed over the two parts (or two halves) of the second volume of the *Geschichte*: the first half is dedicated to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the

<sup>33</sup>Heeren, *Geschichte des Studiums*, I, pp. 285 sqq. (quoted by Buhle).

second to the sixteenth. In the fifteenth century, the rebirth of Plato and Aristotle's philosophy is underlined, with more space devoted to Platonism and its most important representatives. The dominant figures are Bessarion (II, pp. 131–157), with an account of the *In calumniatorem* book by book; and, after Plethon, Ficino, who is presented at great length (II, pp. 169–341), closely following the arguments of the *Theologia platonica*. “The fundamental idea, which dominates throughout Ficino's philosophy and is the reason why he links philosophy to Christianity, is the following: the derivation of the human soul from the divinity, and its state and destiny to reunite itself with the divinity, if it is capable of freeing itself from material ties whereas it is in the body and from its seductive attractions” (II, p. 172). Buhle finds Ficino interesting because the latter represents the typical form of the Platonism of the time, which is Neoplatonism. This is an example of “a transcendental philosophy” which is at the same time pantheism, because, since God is “the eternal original form of all forms, all things are for the divinity and in the divinity”, and theism, because God is the creator, the “absolute, simple, eternal infinite, omnipotent intelligence, superior in a way that is incomprehensible to all creatures, even to those which are closest to it” (II, pp. 322–323).

Fifteenth-century Aristotelians are judged to be less important than the Platonists. Buhle had previously provided a positive appraisal of Bessarion (II, pp. 131–157), who “understood Aristotelian philosophy in a very exact way, above all in the points that concern its difference from Plato's philosophy as far as Christianity is concerned”, even though “he more frequently moves away from its true, original meaning when he tries to liken it to Platonism” (II, p. 155). However, in the pages devoted to Aristotle, Buhle includes above all Cusanus and Agricola; he does not recognise Cusanus as a Platonist and explains his thought by summarising the *De docta ignorantia*, the *De coniecturis* and the *Idiota* (II, pp. 342–353). The last chapter on the fourteenth century is devoted to Cabbalist philosophy, expounded along general lines, and then above all in the thought of Giovanni Pico (II, pp. 381–447).

In the sixteenth century, what stands out first is the Protestant Reformation and the figures of Erasmus (II, pp. 456–465) and Melancthon (pp. 478–508); then come the events of “pure Peripateticism”, in which Buhle includes those who made an effort to understand Aristotelian thought truly, from the texts, or who adopted it in order to modify or challenge it (among them Pomponazzi, to whom he devotes several pages [II, pp. 528–586]; among the opponents critical of Aristotelian thought, we find Cesalpino, Patrizi, Telesio, Berigardus [i.e., Claude Guillermet de Bérigard], Nizolius and La Ramée); finally, the figures of the first – in Buhle's opinion – original thinkers, among whom he highly esteems Giordano Bruno, whom he treats at length (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 703–856), and then Cardano, Vanini and Campanella.<sup>34</sup> The section on the sixteenth century closes with the presentation

<sup>34</sup>The syntagm “reiner Peripateticismus” imitates Brucker's (IV<sup>1</sup>, pp. 148–352) *genuina Aristotelis philosophia*, by which he, too, defines sixteenth-century Aristotelianism, in contrast to Scholasticism, beginning with one of the most significant figures, Pomponazzi, as Buhle does here.

of the rebirth of other ancient systems: Lips (*Lipsius*), Montaigne, Charron, La Boétie, Machiavelli, Bodin and others. Finally, to end this volume and the treatment of the age, Buhle passes without any interruption to Francis Bacon (II, pp. 950–968), whose appeal to experience he stresses positively, contrasting it with the “apriorism” of the aforementioned authors.

The third volume of the history of modern philosophy, devoted to the seventeenth century, is particularly thorough. The philosophy of Descartes stands out, more for the widespread discussions that his thought aroused in many circles and circumstances, in France, Holland, and England, than for the figure of that thinker himself. The other philosophers of importance, besides Descartes, are Gassendi, Hobbes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Cudworth, and the English Platonists. Locke and Leibniz are omitted from the seventeenth century because they are included in the lengthy treatment concerning the century of the Enlightenment. Up to now, Buhle comments, philosophy has been dominated in various ways by Peripateticism. “With the seventeenth century we have the beginning of original independence (*Selbständigkeit*) in speculative reason because, through the research of their immediate predecessors, the best minds learnt rather well, quickly and convincingly, the weakness and inadequacy of Greek dogmatism, especially Aristotelianism, and they found an opportunity to carry out independent research, in an age when freedom of spirit was not yet imprisoned by prejudice and those thinkers were not lacking in spiritual strength” (III, ‘Vorrede’, pp. III–IV). Descartes can take credit for having invented the new method; his opponents (like Arnauld, Gassendi, and Hobbes) and also those who were educated in his school of thought, like Malebranche and Spinoza, were independent thinkers rather than Cartesians.

Buhle, however, does not have a great liking for Descartes. The treatment devoted to him is thorough and systematic (III, pp. 3–86) and follows the plan of the fourth part of the *Discourse* and the *Meditations*, leaving physics, the physiology of the passions, and morals to the end. The *Objections* and *Replies* (of Hobbes, Arnauld, and Gassendi) and the criticism of Voet (*Voetius*), de Roy (*Regius*), Reefsen (*Revius*), and Trigland (*Triglandius*) are considered later. It is necessary with Descartes to distinguish the mathematician, physicist, astronomer, and cosmologist, on the one hand, from the philosopher, on the other: “he was incomparably greater in the former aspect than he was in the latter” (III, pp. 9–10). However, he made progress only in mathematics and paved the way for Leibniz, while in cosmology and in astronomy he merely embraced hypotheses (the theory of vortices) that Newton then dropped. His philosophical principles are neither valid nor soundly based; his criterion, “‘What I think distinctly is true and real’, leads him to mistake ideal for real, as is apparent in his propositions on the soul as a thinking substance, in his demonstrations of the existence of God, and so forth” (III, p. 42).

Such hostility towards Descartes is not dictated only by Buhle’s adherence to objections of a Kantian nature, which are obvious in the last two expressions, but by a strong dislike of dogmatic apriorism and by a preference for all the expressions of empiricism, which is antithetical to Descartes’ perspective. Buhle contrasts Descartes to Gassendi, to whom he dedicates a lengthy chapter (III, pp. 87–222). “Gassendi had very little faith in human reason because he knew its

weaknesses; he stayed close to immediate experience; thus he showed a preference, among the philosophical systems of antiquity, for the Epicurean and took this as the basis for his own; he defended himself from superstitions and fanaticism, as he also did from the unilateral philosophical dogmatism of the Aristotelians and the Cartesians" (III, pp. 96–97). However, Gassendi kept his distance from Epicureanism in metaphysics (God, Providence, the soul and its immortality) and reasoned for himself, referring to Revelation (III, p. 128). In general, "he made an effort to improve empiricism by means of rationalism and to make it agree, as far as possible, with theology and psychology, even though he was never fully convinced of his procedure, sensing its inconsistencies". Agreeing with Bayle, Buhle judges Gassendi to incline towards scepticism, yet he appreciates his empirical standpoint, which attracted many followers in Europe (III, pp. 221–222).

The treatment of Hobbes also takes up considerable space, the greater part of which, however, is reserved for his politics (III, pp. 268–325). Buhle shows the same particular attention to British political thought on other occasions too (with Locke, Hume, Smith, and Steuart), where the new science of political economics was maturing. He summarises and articulates Hobbes' theory in 19 points, and starts by underlining, not without disapproval, the concurrence of private morality and public behaviour, the confusion between natural law and moral prescriptions and, finally, "the identification of natural law in general with morals" (III, p. 275). Buhle shows how the need for peace leads to a preference for government by an absolute monarchy, from which the paradoxical consequences of this coherent absolutism derive. Yet in the end he is surprised that "such numerous, manifestly wrong paradoxes, to which he was led due to his initial fundamental error, did not attract his attention to the unsustainability of his system" (III, p. 323).

The treatment of the first part of seventeenth-century thought ends with a chapter on the moral philosophy of the Jesuits, Pascal, Huët, and Glanvill. In the second part, the figures that stand out are Malebranche first of all, and then Spinoza (III, pp. 430–498 and 508–660), who are presented as a part of the history of Cartesianism after the death of Descartes; a European Cartesianism, one might say, that extends from Holland to Germany, Spain, England and, of course, France. As for Spinoza, who is remembered for the universal condemnation of his sinful atheism, Buhle also recalls how "only in recent years, in the dispute between Mendelssohn and Jacobi on Lessing's Spinozism, has the opportunity arisen for Jacobi to characterise Spinozism according to its true spirit and its true worth and to pay justice to the philosophical muse of its founder" (III, p. 517). Traces of Spinozism, that is, of a "pantheistic system", can be found in philosophy from the earliest times, and it seems to be the destiny of "the very nature of dogmatic philosophical reason, which, in the end, when conducted rigorously, must give rise to pantheism". No other philosopher has attained the clarity and consequentiality of Spinoza. "As for the agreement of Spinozism with the natural procedure of dogmatic reason, it may have gone unnoticed that Spinozism won over the best philosophical minds, either as unconditioned followers or at least as scholars that paid attention and respect to it since they maintained similar views, or because they saw the foundations of Spinozism itself in the nature of reason, but they did not say so aloud in order not

to encounter the prejudice of their contemporaries and to ensure that they would not become the object of persecution; yet they professed it in secret" (III, pp. 653–654). In this attitude towards Spinoza, despite the new atmosphere created by Jacobi's counterproductive polemic, Buhle again seems to share Kant's dislike of Spinoza and the historiographical tradition, partly German (Buddeus: cf. *Models*, II, pp. 363–369), partly going back to Bayle, of a kind of detestable Spinozist category that was assumed to run through the whole history of human thought.

With the fourth volume of the *Geschichte* the long account of the history of thought in the eighteenth century begins, and it continues to the end of the work, dealing, however, with Kant and early German Kantianism in a separate chapter. The transition to the true age of the Enlightenment is prefaced by a kind of general summary of the "state of philosophy in civilised European nations" towards the end of the seventeenth century. What was later to be called the "age of the crisis of the European conscience" is at times described by Buhle in sombre tones. It is the age of the struggle between Catholic religious repression and freedom. "But shadows are part of every painting and they do not diminish the pleasing impression of the whole picture [ . . . ]. And who can deny that, at the very least, the whole does not produce a pleasing impression for the historian of philosophical reason, or of the human spirit in general, when the cultural situation towards the end of the seventeenth century is made the subject of the painting?" (IV, p. 5). The shadowy areas are represented by the Jesuits in Italy, Spain, Portugal, and France. France, however, was never wholly subject to the papacy and also experienced the religious Reformation. The picture is thus brighter in France, as it is in Holland and England, while Germany lagged behind in philosophical culture. However, "in the eighteenth century the genius of the German nation regained what it had lost before" (IV, p. 31).

"The true state of philosophy, in general, at the end of the seventeenth century, can be seen most characteristically in the works by Bayle, one of the finest minds that ever lived, who embraced the whole of the theology and philosophy of his time and exercised therein his truly critical talent with inexhaustible diligence" (IV, p. 33). Buhle has a great preference liking for the figure of Bayle, whose turbulent life he narrates, along with the equally turbulent critical movement of his works (IV, pp. 33–106). "His opinions on philosophy and the positive religion of his time, and his war against the dominant superstition, reveal a liberal philosophical thinker. Yet he used his talent only to break up the ancient philosophical systems, which had been put back together in his time, and also to show the unsustainability of some of the dogmas of positive theology, without, however, replacing them with anything better" (IV, p. 104). Bayle is a sceptic, and Buhle has no sympathy for scepticism, although he greatly appreciates, as in this case, its anti-dogmatic function.

The overall picture of the eighteenth century begins with the presentation of two contrasting figures who guard its entrance: Leibniz and Locke. Buhle then continues with minor characters and subsequently dwells on the early eighteenth century in Germany, represented, after Tschirnhausen and Ch. Thomasius, by Wolff and early Wolffism, considering both its followers and its opponents. A lengthy chapter then follows on English philosophy (comprising nearly all of vol. V and the first part of vol. VI), which, in addition to Berkeley and Hume, contains lengthy treatises on

the Scottish philosophy of common sense, on the theory of moral sentiments from Shaftesbury to Ferguson, on Priestley and the disputes concerning materialism and determinism, and on the theory of political economics (Hume, Smith and James Steuart). This phase of English philosophy is the aspect of the Enlightenment which Buhle most appreciates. Buhle proceeds to present the French Enlightenment, but he considers it an age of decline in French culture, after its apogee in the previous century. The causes of this decline are, for Buhle, luxury, sensuality, and frivolity, irony directed at philosophical “systems”, bigotry and Jesuit domination, the exclusive use of the French language and a loss of Latin, no knowledge of German thought and very little of English, at least at the beginning of the century (VI, pp. 50–56). The second half of vol. VI is entirely devoted to German thought: from about the mid-eighteenth century to Kant, Kant’s system, and the initial results of Kantian philosophy in Germany (VI, pp. 503–574, 575–731, and 732–772); and with this the history of modern philosophy comes to an end.

As stated above, Leibniz and Locke are the two great minds who oppose one another at the beginning of the eighteenth century, one with his aprioristic dogmatism and the other with his empiricism. Yet Buhle never indulges in easy schematizations and gives an account of their philosophical positions in all their richness. “If Newton is the pride of Britain, Leibniz is that of our fatherland” (IV, p. 119). Yet Buhle immediately moderates his pride. Leibniz’s culture is eclectic, and he is a polyhistorian and a ‘polypragmon’. “Even his philosophy, to the extent to which it can be called his, is like the philosophy of a polyhistorian and a ‘polypragmon’. It is not the product of free, independent, original speculation as was that of his contemporaries, Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Locke, and others, but rather the result of the comparison and criticism of ancient systems, an eclecticism whose failings he sought to overcome in his own way, so that it looks like an original system” (IV, p. 131). Buhle outlines this system beginning with the theory of knowledge contained in the *Meditationes de cognitione, veritate et ideis*; he then explains monadology, again following the *Meditationes*, moves on to the *Theodicy* and, after briefly examining the discussions with Bayle and Clarke, swiftly ends with ethics and law. At this point Buhle intervenes with a few “general observations to reach a verdict on the validity and value of the system” (IV, pp. 174–186; quotation from p. 174). Leibniz exploited the sole principle of non-contradiction and also founded his metaphysics on it, followed faithfully in this by the Wolffian school. Now, on this principle one can only base the logical and formal value of thought and also metaphysics must follow it. However, the truth of the contents of metaphysics is not involved in it and it thus ends up as a set of simple formal concepts, which say nothing about reality.

From this erroneous presupposition, Leibniz consequently arrived at the point of claiming to know the absolute essence of beings through the understanding. He did not specifically distinguish sensibility from understanding; therefore, he could not distinguish the world of phenomena from reality in itself, either. At this point, Kant is named explicitly, and Buhle cites his criticism of Leibniz regarding the amphiboly of concepts of reflection (IV, pp. 176–177). Later observations concern the erroneous nature of the concept of the monad, the principle of indiscernibles,

pre-established harmony and its consequent determinism, with a serious threat to the concept of the freedom of the human soul; finally, further objections involve theodicy. After this severe theoretical criticism, Buhle returns to his account, examining one by one (as he had done with Descartes) the complicated web of discussion aroused by Leibniz: with Cudworth, Foucher, Bayle, and Lamy, against the Cartesians in general and Malebranche and Nizolius. Buhle only omits the dispute with Locke, saving it for the treatment in the chapter reserved for him.

Immediately after Leibniz, Buhle comes to Locke himself, fully expounding the *Essay*, following the four books analytically, to conclude with the criticisms resulting from Leibniz's *New Essays*. The conflict between empiricism and virtual innatism was to be solved by Kant. "What was erroneous in both Locke and Leibniz's systems has been revealed by Kant's critic of pure reason". Also, according to Buhle, Locke confused sensibility and understanding. "While Leibniz conceded too little to sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*) and too much to the understanding (*Verstand*), Locke, as far as knowledge is concerned, conceded little to the understanding and too much to sensibility. The true specific difference between the two faculties of sensibility and understanding was ignored by both philosophers" (IV, p. 281). However, despite this, Buhle has a certain liking for Locke, and he does not neglect his merits; these consist, basically, in his having brought empiricism to its conclusions with great rigour. He is also to be credited with the subtlety of his psychological analysis; hence his "philosophical style, which is simple, calm, precise and clear, even noble", a model of its kind, whose beauty, however, can be perceived only in the original text and is, more or less, lost in translation (IV, p. 283).

What Buhle seems to appreciate above all about Locke, however, is his political-religious (and economic) thought, as expressed in the *Treatises* and in the *Epistola de tolerantia*. These works are "some of the richest in their teaching". Locke raised the constitution of his country to the level of principle; it is a "philosophy of the English constitution". "He declared himself firmly and openly in favour of the rights of the people, yet in no way did he renounce the just authority of government once the constitution of a country has been established. It is an appreciation acquired in the most recent times the fact that, whenever a government acts resting on a sound authority together with the necessary foresight, that government has no need to fear any harmful consequences from a constitutional theory that does not forget the people's rights" (IV, pp. 376–377). One could say that in this appraisal Buhle reveals his stance as a liberal constitutionalist, who has just experienced the recent French Revolution.

Wolff in Germany on one hand, and the highly productive period of English and Scottish thought on the other constitute the most profound experience of the whole of modern philosophy before Kant. With Wolff, Leibniz's philosophy, which was "an aggregate", found that "creative and systematic" mind that was able to "raise it to the level of a system" (IV, p. 571). In this way German thought was given a clear direction to follow. Locke played the same role in English thought. However, his was "free philosophical research, not tied to the shackles of a systematic form, effected with clarity and simplicity. Hence Locke's *Essay* could not but arouse completely different effects in the British philosophical spirit". These effects were



Berkeley's idealism, Hume's scepticism and, born of their opposition (both being so contrary to the common feeling of reason), the philosophy of common sense. Yet "the English philosophers were also the first, after the Greeks, to concern themselves with research into the principles of ethics [...]. The hypothesis of moral feeling (*moralischer Gefühle*) as the basis for morality and likewise the other moral principles I have cited [...] also have their own undeniable value since they promoted the advance of reason towards practical truth" (V, 'Vorrede', pp. VII–IX).

It is impossible, and it would also be pointless, to report everything in Buhle's exposition, so extensive, precise, and rich in personal interpretation. We have mentioned his great interest in political economics, a discipline he saw as having been first founded by Hume's essays and by the theories of Adam Smith and James Steuart. Although he had already written at length on their ideas concerning natural rights, the rights of the state and politics, he devotes "a special section to the history of the theory of political economics, both because, apart from the fact that it is a branch of politics in general, it is one of the main fields of politics itself and because it was the English, more than the philosophers and statesmen of any other country, who particularly elaborated it and who contributed to its constitution based on just principles" (V, p. 482). Economic theories originated in England for geographical reasons (England's maritime trade) and for political reasons (the liberal constitution). Hume, however, did not elaborate his economic ideas systematically, unlike Adam Smith (V, pp. 601–602), to whom Buhle gives his greatest attention and approval. It seems to him that these Englishmen "set out, developed, and demonstrated the true principles of political economics and that contemporary or later political writers agree with them on the essentials and differ only in the diverse extension accorded to these principles, in their application to particular objects, in the consequences they draw from them, and in a further discussion on single topics" (VI, pp. 3–4).

We have already spoken of Buhle's lack of appreciation for the French Enlightenment. Yet he devotes an extensive chapter to the French eighteenth century, beginning with Condillac and then lingering over Helvétius, Robinet, and Bonnet (VI, pp. 56–76, 76–173, 173–245, and 245–302). He is interested in the system of materialistic naturalism, with which he in no way agrees but whose systematic organicism he admires, particularly in Helvétius. After briefly discussing La Mettrie, Maupertuis and others, he arrives at Rousseau (VI, pp. 350–364) and Voltaire, and concludes with a long section on the philosophical contributions of D'Alembert and Diderot (VI, pp. 370–416 and 416–499).

Kant's philosophy is the conclusion not only to German thought but to the whole history of modern thought. Buhle presents Kant's work as that of someone who, for metaphysics taken broadly, brought to a satisfactory, definitive conclusion the philosophical disquiet expressed by so many systems, all of which were confuted by those who came after them. Philosophy had not enjoyed the success that mathematics had from the time of Euclid. Even logic, while valid when it establishes the principles of pure *thinking*, is subject to the challenges of the Pyrrhonians when it comes to the principles of *knowing*. Realism and idealism in knowledge, materialism and immaterialism in psychology, theism, deism, pantheism, naturalism

and atheism in theology, optimism and pessimism in theodicy, unsolved disputes concerning taste, natural rights, morals politics and economics: these are the domains in which battles over the most conflicting opinions were fought (VI, pp. 576–577).

Kant's thought is presented as that which begins with Hume's sceptical criticism of the principle of cause and attempts to answer the question: "Is something like metaphysics in general possible for human reason?" (VI, p. 578). Kant replies to Hume's scepticism with the critical approach, far more radically than Aristotle and Locke had done, in particular demonstrating the possibility of a priori synthetic judgements. The exposition proceeds slowly from this, following the thread of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, without any reference to the works before 1781. The only "pre-critical" element is the presence of an ontology as the first problem of dialectic, covering half a page (VI, p. 617), followed by psychology, cosmology, and theology. Buhle pays considerable attention to the last pages of the *Critique*, the "history of reason", because, as we have said, he finds in them Kant's explanatory theoretical contribution to the problem of the historiography of philosophy (VI, pp. 635–637).

The presentation of the first *Critique* is followed by that of the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (VI, pp. 637–643), the only discipline among those that constituted metaphysics for the ancients to escape Kant's criticism unscathed: "the so-called metaphysical doctrine of bodies, which today is called metaphysics of nature (science of nature), philosophy of nature" (VI, p. 637). This is followed by an exposition of the *Critique of Practical Reason*, together with the *Foundations* (VI, pp. 643–674), and the *Critique of Judgement*, which is presented as a mediator between theory and practice, nature and freedom (VI, pp. 674–728). Buhle describes the doctrine of taste in detail (VI, pp. 680–713), while the doctrine of teleological judgement is expounded more briefly. The conclusion to the chapter on Kant is polemical towards Fichte. Kant claimed he had expounded in his philosophy only the idea of transcendental philosophy, but this was an act of modesty. In practice, Kant's philosophy is a complete, definitive system, which required minor revisions and additions only in some of its parts. There is no principle that goes beyond criticism, and Kant himself "publicly formulated his judgement on Fichte's *Doctrine of Science*" (VI, p. 729).

While convinced of the truth of Kantian thought, Buhle does not hesitate to prolong his history after Kant, not only to view its developments among those who claimed to continue it, and then became its opponents, but also, in recognising the validity of the opponents' objections, to admit that he, too, found a certain difficulty in Kantianism and that he was willing to acknowledge that there seemed to be no possibility of finding any real solutions. The difficulties Kant runs up against seem almost inevitable. However, Buhle goes on to present them, while rejecting all the conclusions of the post-Kantians without proposing any solutions himself and, despite everything, losing none of his staunch support of Kant. The chapter on the post-Kantians is short in the *Geschichte* (VI, pp. 732–772) but much longer in the *Lehrbuch* (IX, pp. 708–920). The *Geschichte* mentions Reinhold, Schulze's *Aenesidemus*, Maimon, and Beck, and lingers over the Fichte of the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794. Up to this point, apart from a few further details, the

*Lehrbuch* coincides word for word with the *Geschichte*, but then goes on with a more extensive consideration of Fichte's work (no further, however, than the dispute over atheism of 1800), an exhaustive account of Bouterwek's *Apodiktik*, and, after a few pages dedicated to Bardili, of the philosophy of nature and identity, up to Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800) and *Bruno*, to end with a brief mention of Jacobi. In the *Lehrbuch*, the discussion of each of these figures is accompanied by a brief bibliography and by Buhle's critical considerations, in smaller print, after the main text.

Before Reinhold's *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, Kant's thought had met with hostility, as well as several misunderstandings. Feder, Eberhard, Schwab, and many others spoke out against him, maintaining that Kant "teaches idealism, removes all objective reality and turns all human knowledge into a subjective façade". The reply from the Kantian school consisted in distinguishing between so-called idealism in the everyday sense and Kant's transcendental idealism, which makes only the principles of knowledge depend on human reason, while "reality, which is known according to the principles of reason, is in no way given subjectively but is contained in the thing in itself, outside us and independent of us, even if that thing in itself, for our knowledge, is =  $x$ . [...] The thing in itself, precisely because it is in itself, cannot be represented yet is nevertheless =  $x$ , not = 0" (*Gesch.*, VI, pp. 734–735).

Reinhold believed he could come to the aid of Kant's philosophy and complete it, where it seemed deficient, finding representation to be the class common to all faculties, to which sensible intuition and concepts can be referred, a class that Kant had indeed presupposed even if he had not developed it. Developing it was, for Reinhold, in the spirit of Kantianism and could also clarify the problem of the objectivity of things outside ourselves and of the relationship of things in themselves to our knowledge. Hence the theory of the human capacity for representation was produced, which Reinhold expounded as a philosophy of elements. Representation is the unit by which "the representing subject and the object represented are distinguished in consciousness". Reinhold's work was greeted with enthusiasm. However, it then became apparent that it had not brought about any advantage and that idealism had not been rejected. Such were the observations of the author of the *Aenesidemus*, who reiterated the accusation of idealism levelled at Kant's philosophy and at that of Reinhold. The opponents' objections increased "and it became equally difficult for supporters [of Kantianism] to refute them". The failings that Kant's system was accused of, "even by those who had been its strongest supporters", can be summed up as follows (VI, pp. 736–737):

1. Even after his speculation, scepticism remains, the type of scepticism relating to the possibility of knowing things in themselves: "on one hand, the idealism of philosophical reason is unsatisfactory, on the other, realism, the opposite system, had been completely overcome (*aufgehoben*) by critical philosophy. Kant, however, postulated a thing in itself, but this is a concept that is completely null and void, which is demolished by the very principles of knowledge admitted with it; thus on this point the Kantian system contradicts itself".

2. Kantian philosophy lacks a complete systematic unity. There is an opposition between *thinking* and *knowing*, and it is impossible to see how they can be united in a single 'I' and what the supreme principle would be that could grasp their unity beyond their opposition (VI, pp. 737–739).

The author of *Aenesidemus* and Salomon Maimon stressed these problems. The latter also pointed out the vicious circle created by Kant in deducing categories from judgements whereas it is the latter that should be deducible from categories as the principles of all verification (VI, p. 739). Finally, Buhle refers to Beck's observations concerning the thing in itself, which should be eliminated completely: "Everything that appears to us to be outside ourselves is based solely on our faculty of thinking and representing and merely consists in this and in virtue of this" (VI, p. 741). Buhle acknowledges that these statements correspond to the spirit, if not to the letter, of Kant's system; therefore, Fichte rightly believed that Beck had captured its true meaning.

At this point, we come to the exposition of Fichte's thought, focusing on his *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794 but also bearing in mind his later writings, such as the first *Appeal* to the public after being accused of atheism and his *Bestimmung des Menschen* (*Gesch.*, VI, p. 742–772). In the *Lehrbuch* Buhle also adds a brief examination of the anonymous writings before the *Wissenschaftslehre*, that is to say, the *Contributions to the Correction of the Public's Judgement Concerning the French Revolution*, concerning which Buhle attacks the alleged originality of Fichte, who established the basis of the right to property on the so-called *theory of formation*, essentially on labour (*Lehr.*, IX, pp. 779–781; he had already mentioned this – here, too, in a polemical tone against Fichte – when speaking of Locke: *Gesch.*, IV, p. 309). Finally, Buhle briefly mentions the work on revelation and the works on natural rights, morals, and the closed commercial State.

The entire examination of Fichte focuses on his doctrine of science, that is to say, on his claim to go back further than Kant's *Critique*, before it, to the principles that were assumed to constitute the absolute foundation of knowledge in the self-positing of the 'I', the creator of the non-I, and thus the solver of the problem of the thing in itself. After having expounded Fichte's work at length and with attention to every minute detail, Buhle permits himself a few general critical observations (in smaller print, *Lehr.*, IX, pp. 774–777), which reveal his radical dissent. The concept of the doctrine of science constitutes a formal system in which reality is presupposed, but not justified, and the famous three principles are nothing but the principles of identity, contradiction, and sufficient reason in their logical formality, from which nothing real may be obtained. If the 'I' were really the absolute, which posits not only the form but also the very reality of things, there would be no need to demonstrate that it posits itself and how it does so. Therefore, by demonstrating how the 'I' posits itself, one falls into the contradiction by which the 'I' posits itself before there is an 'I'. As for Spinoza, it is impossible to deduce the multiple from the unity of the substance, so for Fichte it is impossible to explain and deduce infinite multiplicity from the unity of the 'I'. The conclusion is: "However enthusiastic the success" of Fichte's work was thanks to his disciples, and however much Reinhold

may have appreciated it as “the only true speculative system”, “the philosophical public, whose voice is after all significant in the field of speculation, gradually came to judge it, deciding that it is indeed a noteworthy document of philosophical spirit but in no way the jewel in the crown of philosophy that had so long been sought after and desired” (*Lehr.*, IX, p. 777).

After Fichte, the other thinker involved in the legacy of Kantian problems that Buhle considers at length is Friedrich Bouterwek (IX, pp. 782–827), whom he describes as a “colleague” and “friend” at the same time as making “a couple of critical observations” (IX, pp. 797–798). He does so after having expounded the first part of the *Apodiktik*, the theoretical work of his colleague in Göttingen, who was better known and renowned for his aesthetics. Bouterwek, too, is searching for an apodictic science that can stand at the basis of the divarication, which he conceives as merely subsequent, between dogmatism and scepticism (perhaps Buhle meant ‘idealism’). This basis, this initial moment, is assumed to be given by a “special absolute cognitive faculty”, by which we affirm being before any distinction and opposition between the subject and the object, between the ideal and the real. However, inner experience, Buhle objects, proves only the presence of sensation and reason and Bouterwek’s absolute cognitive faculty, which is supposed to be their unifying root, is an imaginary postulate.

The same criticism is aimed at Schelling’s philosophy of identity. Buhle expounds Schelling’s philosophy of nature at length and takes into account his thought up to *Bruno* and Hegel’s *Differenzschrift* of 1801. He claims he does not wish to intervene in the various hypotheses of Schelling’s philosophy of nature but only in that concerning the “principle of his transcendental philosophy”, that is to say, identity. According to Buhle, this “is a totally empty concept which destroys itself”. “Schelling wants to overcome (*aufheben*) all oppositions in the infinite. And this is the absolute identity of identity and non-identity. However, in this way the principle rests on the annulment of the fundamental law of thinkability and knowability”, that is to say the principle of identity (IX, p. 916).

The last pages of the *Lehrbuch* are devoted to Jacobi. While the debate on Kant’s philosophy was taking place, Jacobi’s thought gained increasing credit, thanks also to the elegance of his style and presentation. However, his is “a philosophy of non-knowing cloaked in the semblance of faith, since it shows that all speculative philosophical systems lead to fatalism, which does not agree with the reasonable, free nature of man, with morality or with religion” (IX, p. 918).

**11.1.4.4** Just as he had avoided a full definition of the concept of the history of philosophy at the beginning of the work, so Buhle does not spend time on methodological norms. In no way does he present a theory of historiographical method, either in the form of principles or as pieces of advice. If we want to describe his method, it is necessary to deduce it indirectly by taking it from his historiographical practice.

We could begin by highlighting his repetition of the word ‘*Erzählung*’, i.e. ‘tale’. “The tale of the history of philosophy is linked to the critical literature that refers to it”. Or: “The history of philosophy is a pragmatic tale” (*Lehr.*, I, ‘Vorrede’,

p. [4]; ‘Vorerinnerungen’, p. I). Moreover, some years before, at the beginning of the unfinished *Geschichte des philosophirenden menschlichen Verstandes* (‘Vorbericht’, p. III), Buhle says: “By the history of the human understanding that philosophises I mean a pragmatic tale (*eine pragmatische Erzählung*) of the many attempts, carried out by the best minds in antiquity and in the modern age, to reach satisfactory conclusions concerning the most important properties of reason. Such a tale [...] is a tale of diverse philosophies and its outcome is a historical argument in favour of the rightness of that philosophical system that can unite the truths taken from the philosophies and exclude their errors”. In the same work (pp. 15–16), this insistence on the aspect of narrating, linked there to a kind of affirmation of the multiplicity and plurality of philosophies in history, is linked, as we have already seen (see above, Sect. 11.1.3), to the concept of “historical truth”, conditioned by the presence of facts (*Data*) and distinct from mere “historical conjectures” or “imaginary hypotheses”. In this way one can perhaps understand Buhle’s very simple, linear way of proceeding, rich in elements taken from the works of the philosophers themselves. He does not deduce one philosophy from another, and neither does he abruptly reduce the wealth of a philosopher’s thought to the schematic logic of a few concepts or arbitrary philosophemes, presented as if they were the fundamental elements in a system. On the contrary, he proceeds in an even style with abundant details, following, or “narrating”, the reasoning without losing sight of the unitary nature of the steps in the argument.

Nonetheless, as we have seen, he includes speculative elements that permit him to rationalise the philosophical *facta* and interpret them to point out their “sense” and “spirit”. Kantian philosophy is a tool well-suited to this aim. Basically, it replaces the criterion of eclecticism, which had characterised the pragmatic historiography of the pre-Kantians Heumann and Brucker. The old name remains in Buhle: his history is still a “pragmatic tale”, with traces of eclecticism, overarched by a Kantian viewpoint, which interprets the pragmatic as the teaching that comes from the “progress” of reason in history. Buhle’s methodology is fully oriented towards recording this progress. The strong emphasis placed on the “modern”, while grounded on the classicist presupposition of the ancient, can be interpreted in the sense of the Kantian and Enlightenment idea of the development of culture; from the point of view of philosophy, it is the achievement of the critical approach which represents true, essential progress, compared to the heights attained, however sublime, by human thought with Aristotle and with the moderns, from Descartes onwards.

However, we must stress that Buhle’s methodology is not reduced to simply reaching Kantianism as the final outcome. While he is convinced of the need to use Kantianism in order to look more deeply into the meaning of facts, his narrative allows him to balance his judgement (and the discovery of the “final meaning” of the story) by collecting historical facts, describing them, and combining them in a far-sighted project that takes a level look at history with an understanding of what is diverse and unfamiliar, preserving his work from the short-sightedness of someone who is solely concerned with judging according to the only point of view considered precise and valid.

There are no substantial methodological differences between the *Lehrbuch* and the *Geschichte*. At times in the former the discourse may seem more schematic and scholastic, while in the *Geschichte* it is more relaxed and narrative in approach. However, this results from the greater articulation of the *Lehrbuch*, where the subject matter is divided into paragraphs, whereas in the *Geschichte* it is subdivided into larger sections that constitute long chapters. Be that as it may, apart from a few cuts made to abridge the text, page after page is repeated to the letter in both works, without the author varying his method according to the different intended readership, i.e., the schools or a wider public. The only significant difference between the two works is the systematic presence in the *Lehrbuch* of the bibliography before the beginning of each section. There are, however, also bibliographical indications in the *Geschichte*, usually given after the account of the philosopher's life and the list of his works. Here there are far more notes, with long quotations from the texts, particularly in Latin, in order to document the account and, briefly, report the outcome of discussions and dissent with critical literature. One should not forget what we have said elsewhere, namely that in both works the exposition is always first-hand; it is not a compendium of doctrines provided by others but a wide-ranging narration of philosophers' thought by means of a direct reading and digestion of their works.

Within the various possible criteria of periodization that we have mentioned, Buhle then proceeds by authors, not by problems. The great themes of philosophical thought are the expression of historical personalities who revealed themselves in the texts of their works. There are very few lengthy introductions to periods or problems, except perhaps on one occasion, at the beginning of the second volume of the *Geschichte* (II, pp. 3–86), where several pages are devoted to searching for the causes of the Humanist Renaissance, which are thus also an introduction to the entire world of modern thought, the subject of the work.

The very brief prefaces ('Vorreden') that precede each of the six volumes of the *Geschichte* (in vols 2 and 3 there are also prefaces to the second half) are of an introductory nature: they only serve as an announcement of the material contained in the volume, yet at times they also contain some interesting observations, given that the division of the volumes coincides with the periodization by centuries. Finally, there is the introduction to the eighteenth century (*Gesch.*, IV, pp. 3–33) that we have seen, consisting in a "general panorama of the state of philosophy in the civilised countries in Europe towards the end of the seventeenth century".

The treatment of the thought of a philosopher or a group, whose components are expounded one after another, almost always corresponds to one section. On the rare occasions when the title of a section mentions a philosophical problem and not a person, in practice the problem can be identified with an aspect of the philosophical personality of an author, if not with his entire personality. For example, section XVII (*Gesch.*, V, pp. 369–481) is entitled: 'History of the dispute on materialism and determinism in England'; in actual fact, after the first three pages, it expounds the thought of Joseph Priestley, albeit seen in relation to the debates he occasioned. Section XVIII (*Gesch.*, V, pp. 481–768 – VI, pp. 3–50), 'History of the theory of political economy in England', deals in practice with

the economic thought of Hume, Smith, and Steuart, examined singly in succession; however in this case, the opening pages on the political, geographical, and economic state of England (*Gesch.*, V, pp. 481–500) have a more extensive, however short, introductory approach.

The treatment by author in the *Geschichte* does not follow a fixed framework but is relatively varied. The account of the philosopher's life usually comes first, within which we find the major works; at the end, a note recalls the principal biographies, the editions as a whole, at times the editions of single volumes and translations into German. In the *Lehrbuch*, the bibliographical part precedes each section. Normally, if the author is sufficiently systematic, Buhle then expounds his thought following the thread offered by the author himself. Descartes may serve as an example of this: his thought is expounded following the systematic plan of the fourth part of the *Discourse* and the *Meditations* (leaving aside the *Objections* and the *Replies*). The Cartesian "system" emerges from this, articulated according to the following points: rules and *cogito*, the soul, the existence of God, the world and physical mechanicism, the soul-body relationship, freedom and passions of the soul, and the rhapsodic ethical considerations reduced to a certain order which is more or less that of the provisional ethics. As we can see, the outcome is a structure respecting Descartes' works, which remotely reflects the "systematism" of Kantian reason: rules as propedeutic, the system with the distinction between theoretical and practical, and, in the former field, the triad of the metaphysical ideas of the soul, God and the world. Similarly, when expounding Spinoza, Buhle begins by following his *Ethics*, which provides the division between theoretical (books I-II) and practical philosophy (III-V); he then sets out the two *Treatises*, which permit him to examine more closely the practical aspects in the field of politics and religion; he leaves *De intellectus emendatione* until last, considering it less important because unfinished.

If the author is not systematic – and Leibniz is not, in Buhle's opinion – then Buhle expresses his thought following a work like the *Monadology*, which does at least present a logical succession of propositions, to move on to the *Theodicy*, and conclude with ethics and philosophy of law. In this case, too, a Kantian type of scheme works, but not even here is the systematism contrived and it does not make the structure too restrictive or artificial. If the philosopher had extensive debate with his contemporaries or predecessors, or somehow gave rise to later discussions, Buhle gives a long account of this, calmly setting out the arguments on both sides, at times separating the exposition of the debate from that of the "system". This is what he does with the *Objections* and *Replies* that are appended to Descartes' *Meditations*; or with Leibniz's *New Essays*, examined in the chapter on Locke and separated from the other discussions stimulated by the German philosopher's thought.

In the very long treatment of Gassendi, the exposition of the works one by one is preferred to the "system": first the *Exercitationes*, in order to account for the anti-Aristotelian polemic, then the works that concern Epicurean philosophy (the translation of Book X of Diogenes Laertius' *De vita et moribus Epicuri*, the *Syntagma*, followed in its tripartite division into logic, physics, and ethics) and, finally, the minor works: against Herbert of Cherbury, Fludd, and Descartes. In the



relatively long treatment of Bayle (*Gesch.*, IV, pp. 33–106), Buhle does not separate the story of his life from the account of his works but deals with them both at the same time. Essentially, Buhle succeeds in harmonizing the following needs: to structure the narrative according to a system, at times very remotely following the structure of the problems considered by Kant, which for him means the objective structure of reason in itself; at the same time, to expound the content of the works, or at least the main ones, as faithfully as possible; to report the philosophical debate aroused with thoroughness, precision and balance.

At times he makes use of schematizations and lists of points numbered in succession: thus, for example, the list of the 15 reasons in favour of the immortality of the soul expounded by Ficino (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 210–223); or the doctrine of Book I of Hume's *Treatise* condensed into 14 points (V, pp. 204–209). There are numerous examples of this. In fact, those lists are frequently suggested by the very structure of the work in question. The use of direct quotations, in inverted commas, is not very frequent; yet, it is part of Buhle's method of exposition and at times he quotes lengthy passages and whole pages, as in the case of Petrarca's "philosophy of life". However, apart from quotations in Latin, as in the case of Petrarca, only the German language is used so that the passages quoted are always in translation. Very often Buhle translates and abbreviates without using inverted commas. However, the reference to the original texts is always direct and faithful.

One might make a further series of observations on the way Buhle intervenes to express a judgement. These moments can be clearly perceived as distinct from the exposition. They are normally found at the end of the treatment of an author, after the account of his "system"; yet there are also judgements expressed in the course of the exposition itself, albeit less frequent than the others, and both types are very brief. Not all expositions end with a judgement, and at times there is none at all.

Only when concluding the treatment of Plato does Buhle formulate a judgement according to two criteria. It comes after he has summarised the contribution (*das Verdienst*) Plato made to "philosophy as a general science" in four points (it is identical in *Gesch.*, I, pp. 252–255, and in *Lehr.*, II, pp. 271–275). The four points (see above, Sect. 11.1.4.3) represent the merits (*Vorzüge*) of Plato's philosophy and are considered because they "signify a considerable step forward (*Fortschritt*) in philosophising reason towards the shrine of truth, good, and beauty. However, if one considers Platonism in relationship to its objective scientific value (*auf seinen objectiven wissenschaftlichen Werth*), then it must be accused of some very essential failings (*Mängel*) and, taken as a whole, one has to consider it a failure as a system (*ein misslungenes System*)" (*Gesch.*, I, p. 254). Two criteria are therefore at work. The first criterion is a relative one: it concerns the progress of a system when compared to earlier systems, in relation however to absolute values (truth, good, and beauty) that perhaps for Buhle are to be found in Kantian philosophy itself, or in the Kantian "idea" of philosophy. The second criterion is an absolute one, which concerns the objective value of the system. The double nature of the criterion in Buhle's judgement on Plato is manifest, but it is neither problematized nor clarified. Nowhere else in Buhle's work have I found such a clear (but problematic) distinction concerning the criteria for evaluating a philosophical system.

Normally, Buhle's judgement sounds somewhat extrinsic in itself because it tacitly expresses the assumption of Kantian positions as comparative criteria. On one occasion when Buhle does openly admit that he has assumed a critical standpoint, we have an interesting judgement, which we can report at length. It is an evaluation of Plotinus' ecstasy. "Plotinus' system, as we have explained it so far, was certainly based on a principle of enthusiasm (*auf einem schwärmerischen Princip*), that of ecstasy, and in the end led to enthusiasm (*Schwärmerey*), theurgy, and magic. Meanwhile, considered from the point of view of critical philosophy, thanks to that principle and the consequences it leads to, it deserves particular attention. What Plotinus calls ecstasy was basically nothing but what the moderns (*die Neuern*) intend when they carry out a complete reflection (*Zurückziehung*) on immediate self-consciousness (*auf das unmittelbare Selbstbewusstsein*) and on what it is previous within it, as a condition for philosophising. It is only that Plotinus did not have a concept of the essence of pure reason, of its possibility of attaining a knowledge of the real and of its limitations with respect to the domain of experience. He thus mistook exalted imagination (*exaltierte Phantasie*) for pure self-consciousness (*mit dem reinen Selbstbewußtsein*) and believed that by means of this self-consciousness it was possible to reach a knowledge of objects that were instead only a vain product of it" (*Gesch.*, I, pp. 685–686).

This judgement contains all the Kantian ingredients: disdain of mystical enthusiasm, transcendental apperception (called here pure self-consciousness, perhaps echoing post-Kantian concepts) as the a priori condition of knowledge and its restriction to experience if one wishes to give it an objective content. It is assumed to represent "truth" compared to the mere hint contained in the Plotinian motif of inner ecstasy. In the appendix to vol. III of the *Lehrbuch* (see above, 11.1.4.1), in reply to the reviewer of the *Neue deutsche allgemeine Bibliothek*, who cautioned him not to judge the thoughts and concepts of the ancients using those of his own time, Buhle replied by distinguishing crude, simple concepts from senseless concepts. He exemplified this statement with the case of the Pythagoreans. It is impossible to say that the world is made of numbers, as the Pythagoreans maintain; therefore, it is necessary to look for a "philosophical meaning" in their system of numbers. Buhle finds this meaning by explaining that for the moderns the Pythagorean number corresponds to "form" and its relationship with the matter of knowing. He seems therefore to repeat a similar operation of seeking a philosophical meaning in the case of Plotinus and his unacceptable – since it is *schwärmerisch* – theme of ecstasy, which is rendered acceptable if translated into the theme of self-consciousness. This is a case when an evaluating judgement, openly referring to a Kantian criterion, becomes somehow more plausible and less extrinsic compared to the ancient text that it is expected to explain and render comprehensible.

**11.1.5** Buhle's historiographical work, both the *Lehrbuch* and the *Geschichte*, was well-received in Germany and, on the whole, reviewed favourably, even if not with enthusiasm. There were also detailed, even pedantic comments on its failings and signs of dissent. By looking at the opinions on the *Lehrbuch* published in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* from 1796 to 1805, we can see a gradual deterioration in the way it was judged. The first volume received almost total

approval: from the outset, the reviewer points out its usefulness, praises the author's talent in elaborating the material and the many first-hand sources he uses, so much so that the textbook is judged to be the best and most complete of all those in circulation (ALZ, no. 282 (1796), cols 636–640). But as soon as the second volume is examined, dissent starts to appear. The observations on the “Kantianizing” interpretation of Aristotle seem to me exemplary. The reviewer approves of the fact that the exposition begins with the theory of knowledge and with the *Organon* but does not accept that this part of Aristotelian thought can be considered equivalent to a “critique” and be called such. The reason for this is that for Aristotle the understanding is a *tabula rasa*, lacking all a priori notions. To believe that there is a critical approach in Aristotle, as Buhle does, leads to a deformation of the rest of the interpretation. Moreover, the reviewer notes Aristotle's own contradictions which Buhle points out, but he attributes them to the initial mistake in the interpretation itself: that Aristotle arrived at the principle of the transcendental but was unable to keep to it; that he rejected the possibility of the knowledge of things in themselves but then conceded it in the *Metaphysics*; that he was able to “deduce” categories but did not have a clue to this deduction; and so on: ALZ, no. 16 (1798), cols 121–124.

Comments on the last section of the *Lehrbuch*, which appeared in 1805, when Buhle had already moved to Moscow, may be significant too. The reviewer finds that the treatment of Kant's philosophy is too discursive and not critical enough and, on the other hand, that the difficulties raised by Buhle are not very pertinent. The final part of the book, on the fate of critical philosophy after Kant, moves too swiftly. For the reviewer, the exposition of Schelling's philosophy of nature and Bouterwek's *Apodiktik* is incomplete; only two pages on Jacobi; an inexplicable silence on Garve, Herder, Engel, and Eberhard. In short, we only see some obscure references of that spiritual conflict (“von dem Conflikt des Geistes”) that was provoked by Kant's *Critique*.<sup>35</sup>

On the whole, the *Lehrbuch* seems to have been better received than the *Geschichte*, a work that is less scholastic and more cultured. On the other hand, from the very first volume of the *Geschichte* one is aware that Buhle is reassembling, or rather reproducing, the textbook, with some , abridgements but without varying the form (“ein unveränderter Abdruck der Paragraphen des Lehrbuchs”). Having to make the exposition of ancient thought an introduction to the modern, the author should not have reproduced but re-elaborated it *ex novo* as an introduction (ALZ, no. 66 (1801), cols 521–526; cf. above all cols 521–523). The fact that he reproduced the *Lehrbuch* in the *Geschichte* seems to have deeply disturbed reviewers, and they frequently reproached Buhle for it. Occasional appreciation is limited to the content. In the second volume, there is a great amount of new material concerning

<sup>35</sup> ALZ, no. 115 (1805), cols 249–254 (on Kant cols 251–252; on the post-Kantians col. 254). The *Literatur-Zeitung* of Erlangen, no. 40 (1802), col. 317, had also criticised the *Lehrbuch* for the lack of space reserved for the great minds of the modern age (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Wolff) and expected the work to be reduced to “ein gedankenloses Hinschreiben für Verleger und Käufer” and to fail to become a treatise valid “um Erweiterung und Bereicherung der Wissenschaften zu thun”.

the sixteenth century, on, for example, Pomponazzi and Bruno. For Bruno Buhle had been able to use the library at the University of Göttingen (this was one of the reasons why Hegel would also appreciate Buhle); however, the parallel between Bruno and Fichte was considered “etwas frappant” (ALZ, no. 196 (1802), cols 89–94). Finally, the profound dissent that the journal shows for Buhle’s “English” bias is significant: he is taken to task for having devoted too much space to the eighteenth century in England and Scotland, to the detriment of Wolff and the German thinkers of the time (Baumgarten, Meier, Crusius, and Daries). It is not true that the Germans are pedantic and unoriginal and that virtuosity and good taste are the prerogative of British writers alone; on the contrary, it is to be hoped, the reviewer says, that there will be an extensive historical work that will place the German school of the eighteenth century in its true light (ALZ, no. 66 (1805), cols 521–525, in particular cols 521–522).

Buhle seems to be judged by his contemporary readers, therefore, without any great praise or any great blame. A similar opinion seems to come from the “colleagues” closest to him in time, the great scholars like Tennemann, Schleiermacher, Hegel, and others devoted to the history of philosophy. In the long, theoretical ‘Einleitung’ to the first volume of his *Geschichte der Philosophie* (which was published before Buhle’s *Geschichte*, in 1798), Tennemann does not cite his colleague from Göttingen, and lists the first volumes of the *Lehrbuch* among the “compendiums and minor works” on the history of philosophy (Tennemann, I, p. LXXXIII). Tennemann does not cite Buhle anywhere in the text itself, even for example in his long treatment of the Eleatic school (I, pp. 150–209) – unlike Tiedemann and Fülleborn, who are mentioned and used more than once – even though Tennemann is aware of Buhle’s contribution on it (*Commentatio de ortu et progressu pantheismi*, 1790), which is mentioned in Tennemann’s bibliographical ‘Anhang’ (I, p. 425). He does mention him, on the other hand, in the ‘Vorrede’ to vol. II (pp. III–XXII) when discussing a none-too-favourable review of the first volume of his own work, which appeared in the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* (no. 13, 1799, pp. 121–128). The anonymity of the review concealed Buhle’s identity.<sup>36</sup> The point in question, which was raised in the review, concerns the problem of pre-Greek philosophies (above all of the Egyptians), which Tennemann omits, starting his history, according to a Kantian scheme, with the Greeks. The reviewer (namely Buhle!) wonders how a history of philosophy can be complete, as Tennemann’s claims to be, if the philosophies before the Greeks are missing; moreover, on the question of the alleged autonomy of Greek thought, he cites Plessing’s contrary theory. Tennemann replies to this by saying, among other things, that Buhle, in his *Grundriss* (both the reviewer and Tennemann call Buhle’s *Lehrbuch* ‘Grundriss’), considers Plessing’s hypothesis to be untenable. By contrast, the reviewer approves of Buhle’s “ethnographic method”, also used by Gurlitt, Meiners, and others, defending his opinion with the fact that in the *Grundriss* Buhle devotes some space

<sup>36</sup>This is attested by the copy of the review which is preserved in the Göttingen University Library, in which the names of the reviewers have been added by hand.

to Oriental philosophies. Moreover, he also reproaches Tennemann for only having included Buhle's work, as we have already said, among the compendiums, while for Greek philosophy it appears to be more extensive than Tennemann's *Geschichte*. For his part, Tennemann makes a show of appreciating Buhle, concerning the exhaustiveness of his bibliography, and indeed says he had used the same approach, namely, "to report only the best works and those most useful for employment, apart from very few exceptions, mainly without any critical judgement".

Schleiermacher is very sparing in his quotations of the historians who preceded him in the incomplete notes, called "history of philosophy", that appeared posthumously; yet, these notes are highly significant (*Geschichte der Philosophie, aus Schleiermacher's handschriftlichen Nachlässen*, ed. H. Ritter, Berlin, 1839). He refers the reader to Buhle concerning "single examples" of the use of Mosaic cosmogony by Pico della Mirandola in his "theosophic philosophy" (pp. 235–237). In other words, Schleiermacher does not discuss Buhle but uses him for the content of his work, when Buhle's erudition could be exploited, as in this case concerning the Italian Renaissance.

It is precisely within these confines that Buhle is also cited and used by Hegel. Only the *Lehrbuch* appears in the list of great historiographical works (Stanley, Brucker, Tiedemann, Tennemann, Ast, Wendt, and Rixner) that Hegel adds to the end of the long 'Einleitung' to his lectures on the history of philosophy. In the few lines that Hegel reserves for him, Buhle alone is spared the scathing remarks that are aimed at all the others. He is spared because he included "precious extracts from rare works", such as those of Giordano Bruno (Hegel<sup>1</sup>, I, p. 135; Hegel<sup>2</sup>, p. 91). It should be remembered that Hegel demanded that only and always the authors, the philosophers themselves, should be referred to as sources, while historians of philosophy were to be used exclusively in cases when they could compensate for a lack of available texts (Hegel<sup>1</sup>, I, pp. 132–133; Hegel<sup>2</sup>, p. 89). This explains why Hegel himself has recourse to Buhle in his chapter on Bruno (Hegel<sup>1</sup>, III, p. 23; Hegel<sup>2</sup>, p. 885). In two other cases, however, i.e., in his treatment of Spinoza (Hegel<sup>1</sup>, III, p. 184; Hegel<sup>2</sup>, p. 885) and Leibniz (Hegel<sup>1</sup>, III, p. 237; Hegel<sup>2</sup>, p. 923), Hegel uses Buhle not for the lack of the works themselves but to report his judgements, and, although he does not entirely agree with him, he refrains from expressing any serious dissent. In short, all things considered, Buhle comes off quite well from the pages of Hegel's *History*.

In France, even before the *Geschichte* had been translated by A.J.L. Jourdan (Paris, 1816), Degérando had used Buhle in the 1804 edition of his *Histoire comparée*, demonstrating that he was fully up-to-date with historiographical activity in Germany. As a preface to the second chapter, entitled 'On Historians of Philosophy', Degérando presents a brief history of the historiography of philosophy, beginning with the ancients (Plato, Aristotle, Cicero) but soon arriving at the moderns, whose works are distinguished into the erudite (Ménage, Bayle, Jonsius, Voss, etc.) or the "histories of philosophy proper" (Deslandes, and then the Germans: Brucker, followed by Tiedemann, Buhle, Meiners, and several others) (Degérando, I, pp. 34–73; Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, pp. 111–195; on Buhle pp. 155–159). When explaining Aristotle's logic, Degérando uses Buhle's Zweibrücken edition. On the question

of categories, he also observes how Buhle distinguishes them from the Kantian ones, but, in his opinion, Buhle did not insist enough on the similarities between the two authors, which are greater than their differences.<sup>37</sup> He does not cite Buhle, however, in his chapter on Kant, where one would have expected to find him, along with the many works on Kantian historiography cited there, such as those by Schultz, Schmid, and Fülleborn, besides the French works by Villers and H. Kinker (translated from Dutch). Buhle reappears, and is praised, when Degérando expounds the “systems born of Kant’s school” (that is the final chapter in the *Lehrbuch*), with some reservations concerning certain inequalities in the length of the various parts and the originality of Buhle’s presentation.<sup>38</sup>

When the French translation of the *Geschichte* appeared in 1816,<sup>39</sup> Cousin immediately reviewed it, combining it with his judgement on Degérando’s work. In Cousin’s account, the flaw in Buhle’s *Geschichte* is the opposite of what Degérando is reproached for: the latter “wanted perforce to concentrate the whole history of the human spirit into a single problem; we shall reproach Buhle, on the contrary, for having divided it up into such small pieces that it completely lacks any link and a centre” (*Fragmens philos.*, p. 62). Cousin begins thus, and the rest of the review is negative and cutting. Buhle is wrong to use the chronological method “without intelligence”. The chronological order should be the natural one, and any other artificial order would be “true disorder, an arbitrary substitution of personal ideas”. Yet “only a complete picture can illuminate and enliven particulars, and the chronological method, used without intelligence, reduces history to a record of incoherent theories, without a link, without light, without interest” (pp. 62–63). The matter becomes more serious for someone, like Buhle, who wants to write the history not only of “metaphysical systems” but of all systems: moral, religious, political, economic, aesthetic, and even geological. “Without losing the chronological thread” he should have sought “in each of the great centuries a historical point of view around which the diverse systems belonging to that century could be ordered”. “When one dares to undertake the complete history of thought, one must have the courage to organize it” (pp. 64–66). Despite its excessive length, Buhle’s *Geschichte* is incomplete and unbalanced. Cousin points out the few pages

<sup>37</sup>Degérando<sup>1</sup>, I, pp. 149–150, observes: “mais il [i.e. Buhle] a peu insisté sur quelques analogies que ces différences ne détruisent point”.

<sup>38</sup>Degérando<sup>1</sup>, II, p. 254, notes: “Les éléments de l’histoire de la philosophie de Buhle [perhaps the *Lehrbuch*, the last volume of which appeared in 1804] ont un grand mérite d’ordre, de clarté et de précision. Par-tout où cet écrivain a travaillé d’après lui-même, il ne laisse rien à désirer; mais on peut regretter qu’il n’ait pas toujours donné la même étendue à chaque partie, la même originalité à chaque exposition [...]”.

<sup>39</sup>The French translation of the *Geschichte* by A.J.L. Jourdan occasioned a censorial intervention by the Catholic Church; the Sacred Congregation of the Index, with a decree dated 27<sup>th</sup> November 1820, included Buhle’s *Geschichte* in the *Index librorum prohibitorum* (List of Prohibited Books); on this matter see I. Tolomio, ‘L’olivetano Mauro Talucci censore della Storia della filosofia moderna di J.G. Buhle’, in *Monastica et Humanistica. Scritti in onore di G. Penco*, ed. F.G.B. Trolese (Cesena, 2003), pp. 829–853.

reserved for Bacon and the many for Bruno; that there are more on Gassendi than Descartes, more on Priestley than Reid, and so forth. Turgot, Watts, Duncan, Lessing, Mendelssohn, etc., are missing. Finally, Cousin does not fail to rebuke the French translator, Jourdan, for not having completed the translation of the *Geschichte*, which stops at Fichte, with the text of the *Lehrbuch*, which continues with Bardili, Bouterwek, Schelling and Jacobi.

In Italy the *Geschichte* was translated by Vincenzo Lancetti (1767–1851) in the 1820s (Milan, 1821–1825). In the ‘Proemio’ to the first volume (pp. 5–12) Lancetti points out the concise nature of Buhle’s first volume on Greek philosophy (condensing Brucker’s four volumes into one), and says he prefers, as far as Greek thought is concerned, “the more recent work by his precise fellow-countryman, Tennemann”. On the other hand, when it comes to modern philosophy, Buhle’s work “turns out to be very fine and highly significant”, far superior to that of ‘our’ sole historian, Appiano Buonafede, who, in *Della restaurazione*, aimed “more to defend religious opinions, proper to his state, than to set in the right perspective the progress of human reason”. Lancetti thus seems to see the novelty in the “modern” approach of Buhle’s work. However, this prologue, written in a tone that sounds very positive, conflicts with the ‘Translator’s Conclusion’ (in the last volume, XII, of 1825, pp. 816–819), which is nearly all negative. While superior to the works of Stanley, Brucker, Buonafede, and “lawyer Triffon”,<sup>40</sup> Buhle’s work has “several flaws”: it is unequal in its treatment, thus revealing “bias”; it uses every opportunity it can to place “in a very bright light the boldest opinions in point of religion, particularly the Catholic one, and in politics”; it ends with the philosophies of Kant and Fichte, as if they had the last word in the eighteenth century; and, showing partiality in favour of the English, it omits many eighteenth-century philosophers, “among whom the Italians”. Lancetti hopes that now, after the interval that separates us from Kant, some new historian will arise who will set out “to vindicate Italian knowledge and present, finally, a history of philosophy that is truly unpretentious, philosophical, complete, free of all kind of prejudice, an enemy to controversy, a friend exclusively to truth, and consequently a delight for the mind and a comfort to the heart”.

In the same period in which Lancetti was engaged in this work, Buhle’s *Geschichte* was being used – in its French translation – by Vincenzo Mantovani in his translation of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the first to appear in Italian (Pavia, 1820–1822). Mantovani found Buhle useful in interpreting Kant, both in the essay ‘Della vita e delle opere di Kant’, the preface to the translation, and in the many notes on the translated text: “For the notes, at times I made use of the work of Villers, at other times of that of councillor Degérando on systems, and more frequently the history by Buhle, who seemed the least biased [...] of the judges of critical philosophy”.<sup>41</sup> This, perhaps, is the most intelligent use of Buhle’s work made by

<sup>40</sup>He is alluding to Giovanni Triffon Novello and his 7 volumes *Sui principi e progressi della storia naturale* (Venice, 1809–1811), on which see above, Chap. 4, Introd.

<sup>41</sup>*Critica della ragione pura* di Manuele Kant, traduzione dal tedesco (Pavia: Bizzoni, 1820–1822), I, pp. 8 and 15–88 (‘Della vita e delle opere di Kant’). See, among other things, Mantovani’s

Italian historiography in the early nineteenth century. Mantovani, a physician from Pavia who had studied in Vienna, was an amateur philosopher, interested in its ideas and less influenced than Lancetti by nationalist feelings and religious scruples.

In conclusion, generally speaking, it seems that from the outset Buhle's work was valued for the historical material it provided, rather than for any originality in interpretative principles or an underlying theory; for the things said rather than for the ideas produced.<sup>42</sup> In this sense, accepting Buhle's limitations, his *Geschichte* can be used to some extent even today. A few years ago, when writing the history of the attribution of the *De vera sapientia* to Petrarca, Raymond Klibansky credited Buhle with having recognised the affinity between this work and Cusanus' *De sapientia*, even though Buhle erroneously believed that Cusanus had imitated Petrarca, since he did not possess enough information to question the attribution to Petrarca of a work that was, on the contrary, a falsification by Cusanus.<sup>43</sup>

**11.1.6** On Buhle's life and works: ALZ, no. 252 (1821), cols 287–288 (obituary); *Beilage zur allgemeinen Zeitung*, no. 36 (1822), p. 141; Meusel, I, pp. 502–504; IX, pp. 167–168; XI, pp. 118–119; XIII, p. 198; XVII, pp. 295–296; XX, I, p. 436; ADB, III, pp. 509–510; on single episodes in his life: GGA, 1803, no. 5, p. 41; nos 7–8, pp. 65–77; 1804, no. 70, pp. 689–691; no. 189, pp. 1881–1887; 1805, no. 154, pp. 1535–1536; 1807, no. 208, p. 2080.

Reviews in periodicals of the time. On the edition of Aristotle: GGZ, 1797, pp. 754–758; GGA, 1803, no. 5, pp. 842–843; NADB, 50, 2 (1800), pp. 525–536 (on the trans. of the *Poetics*). – On single, minor works: ALZ, II (1788), no. 132, col. 463 (*Quellen zur ältesten Gesch.*); ADBibl., 112, 2 (1793), pp. 517–524 (*Encycl. d. Wiss.*); MSSLC, 10, 1794, pp. 54–55 (*Comm. de ortu*); 20, 1795, pp. 28–29 (*Comm. de philos.*); 20, 1795, pp. 27–28 (*Comm. de studiis [...] inter Arabes*); ALZ, 1796 (II), no. 112, cols 60–62 (*Einl. all. Logik*); ALZ, 1798 (III), no. 266, cols 505–507 (*Entwurf*); LZ, 1799, no. 8, cols 57–62 (*Entwurf*); NADB, 72, 2 (1802), pp. 395–398 (*Sextus Emp.*); GGA, 1804, no. 141, pp. 1401–1407 (*Rosenkreuzer u.*

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notes to the last pages of the *Critique*, concerning the “history of reason”, where he points out the importance of criticism as the hermeneutic tool for the whole of the history of philosophy. Before Kant, he writes, “we did indeed have the means by which to determine the characteristics of philosophical systems in antiquity, but not those to understand them perfectly and make them comprehensible to others since it was impossible for us to state the reason for their origin from the dispositions of pure reason” (*Critica della ragione pura*, VIII, p. 202); thanks to Kant, this is now possible. This note by Mantovani literally translates a passage from Buhle, without naming him, however (cf. *Gesch.*, VI, p. 635).

<sup>42</sup>This evaluation is also true of the second half of the nineteenth century: cf. Picavet, p. 4: “Tiedemann, qui professe une philosophie où entrent des éléments empruntés à Locke, à Leibniz et à Wolff, s’est efforcé d’exposer sans parti pris les systèmes, et d’en déterminer la perfection relative. Buhle, qui se rattache à Kant et à Jacobi, a fait preuve d’une immense érudition; Tennemann, qui juge les systèmes du point de vue kantien, a étudié avec beaucoup de soin les sources”.

<sup>43</sup>R. Klibansky, *De dialogis de vera sapientia Francisco Petrarcae addictis*, in Nicolai de Cusa *Opera omnia*, V, *Idiota* (Hamburg, 1983), p. LXVI.



*Freimaurer*); GGA, 1805, no. 98, pp. 973–976 (*Elogium* [...] *Grellmann*); GGA, 1814, no. 160, pp. 1596–1598 (*Krit. Lit. russ. Gesch.*); GGA, 1817, no. 173, pp. 1775–1776 (*De C. Tac. stylo*). On the *Lehrbuch*: ALZ, 1796, no. 282, cols 636–640 (Part I); 1798, no. 16, cols 121–124 (Part II); 1799, no. 5, cols 33–35 (Part III); 1799, no. 341, cols 225–229 (Part IV); 1801, no. 65, cols 513–516 (Part V); 1803, no. 253, cols 521–525 (Parts VI–VII); 1805, no. 115, cols 249–254 (Part VIII); NADB, 35/I (1798), pp. 39–43 (Parts I–II); 44/I (1799), pp. 191–195 (Part III); 50/II (1800), pp. 303–308 (Part IV); 63/II (1801), pp. 440–450 (Parts V–VI); 75/II (1803), p. 502 (Part VII); 94/II (1804), pp. 338–342 (Part VIII); *Leipziger Literaturzeitung*, II, no. 95 (1802), cols 757–759; LZ, 1800, no. 131, cols 1047–1048 (Part IV); 1802, no. 40, cols 313–317. On the *Geschichte*: ALZ, 1801, no. 66, cols 521–526 (vols I–II<sup>1</sup>); 1802, no. 196, cols 89–94 (vol. II<sup>2</sup>); 1805, no. 65, cols 513–519 (vols III–IV); 1805, no. 66, cols 521–525 (vol. V); NADB, 57/II (1801), p. 463 (vol I); 91/II (1804), pp. 362–363 (vol. IV); 91/I (1804), pp. 128<sup>7</sup>–128<sup>8</sup> (vol. V); 100/I, 1805, pp. 148–149 (vols V–VI); GGA, 1805, no. 114, pp. 1129–1130 (vol. VI).

On the reception of Buhle's works: Tennemann, I, pp. LXXXIII and 425; II, pp. III–XXII; F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. H. Ritter (Berlin, 1839), p. 237; Hegel<sup>1</sup>, I, p. 135; III, p. 23, 184, and 237; Hegel<sup>2</sup>, pp. 91, 779, 885, and 923; Degérando<sup>1</sup>, I, pp. 34–73 and 149–150; II, p. 254, footnote; Degérando<sup>2</sup>, I, pp. 155–159; 'Avis de l'éditeur', in *Histoire de la philosophie moderne* [...] par J.G. Buhle [...] traduite de l'allemand par A.J.L. Jourdan (Paris: F.I. Fournier, 1816), I, pp. v–vi; V. Cousin, review of *Histoire de la philosophie moderne* [...] par J.G. Buhle [...], traduite par J.L. Jourdan, in V. Cousin, *Fragment philosophiques* (Paris, 1826), pp. 62–72 (already in *Archives philosophiques*, 1817); V. Lancetti, 'Proemio' and 'Conclusione del traduttore', in *Storia della filosofia moderna* [...] del signor G. Amedeo Buhle [...] tradotta in lingua italiana (Milan: Tipografia di Commercio, 1821–1825), I, pp. 5–12; XII, pp. 816–819; V. Mantovani, 'Della vita e delle opere di Kant', in *Critica della ragione pura*, di Manuele Kant, traduzione dal tedesco (Pavia: Bizzoni, 1820–1822), I, pp. 8, 15–88.

Critical literature: E. Zeller, *Geschichte der deutschen Philosophie seit Leibniz* (München 1873), pp. 516, 518–519, and 522; Picavet, p. 4; M. Wischnitzer, *Die Universität Göttingen und die Entwicklung der liberalen Ideen in Russland im ersten Viertel des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1907), pp. 9–39; Banfi, p. 115; Braun, pp. 250–251; Marino, pp. 181–185; Gueroult, II/1, pp. 393–395; Schneider, pp. 49, 137–141; C. Blackwell, 'Diogenes Laertius's Life of Pyrrho and the interpretation of ancient scepticism in the history of philosophy: Stanley through Brucker to Tennemann', in *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century*, R.H. Popkin and A. Vanderjagt eds. (Leiden, New York and Köln, 1993); A. Altamura, 'Paradigmi per una storia critica delle idee nel modello kantiano di storiografia filosofica: W.G. Tennemann e J. G. Buhle', in *Pensiero e narrazione. Modelli di storiografia filosofica*, ed. G. Semerari (Bari, 1995), pp. 49–85; G. Bonacina, *Filosofia ellenistica e cultura moderna. Epicureismo, stoicismo e scetticismo da Bayle a Hegel* (Florence, 1996), pp. 219–227; I. Tolomio, 'L'olivetano Mauro Talucci (1762–1821) censore della *Storia della filosofia moderna* di J. G. Buhle' in *Monastica et Humanistica. Scritti in onore di G. Penco*, ed. F.G.B. Trolese

(Cesena, 2003), pp. 829–853 [on the inclusion of the *Geschichte* in the *Index librorum prohibitorum*]; S. Di Bella, *La storia della filosofia nell'Aetas Kantiana* (Naples, 2008); G. Piaia, *Le vie dell'innovazione filosofica nel Veneto moderno (1700–1866)* (Padua, 2011), pp. 249, 263–264, 287, and 302; P.K.J. Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy. Racism in the Formation of the Philosophical Canon* (Albany, 2013), pp. 83–87; Ciliberto, pp. 266–267.

## 11.2 Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann (1761–1819)

### *Geschichte der Philosophie*

### *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*

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### 11.2.1 Life

Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann was born in Kleinbrenbach – a small town near Erfurt – on 7th December 1761, the son of Johann Georg, the local Lutheran minister. His poor health, a result of smallpox contracted at the age of 5, prevented him from attending regular studies. He was educated at home by his father, who provided him with an adequate knowledge of Greek and Latin; from 1778 he was able to attend the Erfurt Gymnasium for three semesters; and at the end of 1779 he entered the University of Erfurt to study theology and then, like his father, follow an ecclesiastical career. At Erfurt he was introduced to the study of philosophy by Johann Christian Lossius – later an anti-Kantian – who had been a pupil of Joachim Georg Darjes at Jena, and professed moderate Wolffism, eclectic and open to the influence of Locke. The young Tennemann soon abandoned the idea of studying theology and for some time attended courses in law, albeit with little conviction. In this period, he started to read Plato's dialogues and became interested in the question of the immortality of the soul. In 1781 he moved to the University of Jena and devoted himself systematically to the study of philosophy. Tennemann's professor of philosophy at Jena was Johann August Heinrich Ulrich, a Leibnizian, who, in his lessons, had already begun to deal with Kant's philosophy in an attempt to reconcile it with that of Leibniz (Adickes, no. 224).

It was in this context that Tennemann approached the first *Critique*, although he was unable to penetrate its meaning. In 1787 he was appointed *Magister philosophiae* at Jena, and the following year he published his magisterial disser-

tation, in which he attempted to formulate a confutation of Kant's criticism of rational psychology. But rather than theoretical philosophy, he was increasingly drawn towards the study of the history of philosophy. He began to study Plato's philosophy systematically, and in 1791 he published his first monograph. In the same year, he read Reinhold's *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*, which gained his allegiance to critical philosophy. He then went back to the study of Plato, and between 1792 and 1794 he published his *System der Platonischen Philosophie*. In 1795 he became *Privatdozent* at Jena, and began his activity as a reviewer for the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* and Niethammer's *Philosophisches Journal*. Again at Jena, in 1798, he was appointed extraordinary professor of philosophy without remuneration (*ohne Besoldung*); in that year, he published the first volume of his *Geschichte*. On 4th March, 1804, already well-known for his studies in the history of philosophy (his *Geschichte* consisted by then of four volumes), he was appointed to the chair of philosophy at the University of Marburg, a position formerly occupied by Tiedemann. As soon as he had gained a certain financial independence, he was able to devote himself entirely to his major work, even though, especially in the last decade of his life, his health deteriorated. He died in Marburg on 30th September, 1819.

## 11.2.2 Works

All of Tennemann's works deal with the history of philosophy, or are in some way related to this primary object of his interest. It is true that the dissertation he wrote in order to obtain the degree of *Magister* (*Disputatio philosophica de questione metaphysica: num sit subjectum aliquod animi, a nobisque cognosci possit. Accedunt quaedam dubia contra Kantii sententiam*, Jena: Fickelscherr-Stranckmann, 1788, pp. 28) develops a theoretical theme of rational psychology, which had been the object of Kant's criticism, but Tennemann's interest in this question had arisen within a historical context, from his reading of Plato's *Phaedo*, as well as from the debates on this subject which were taking place at the time. In his brief dissertation, he upheld – against Kant – the possibility of gaining knowledge of the soul as substance and thing in itself (Adickes, no. 637). The subject is taken up again in Tennemann's first monograph on a historical subject, *Lehren und Meinungen der Sokratiker über Unsterblichkeit* (Jena: Akademische Buchhandlung, 1791, pp. xvi, 591); the work presents the Socratic and Platonic theories of the immortality of the soul: the first part focuses on the distinction between Socrates' and Plato's philosophy (pp. 1–235); after a brief summary of Plato's "theological and metaphysical system" (pp. 280–323), the core of the work is devoted to an account and discussion of the arguments for immortality put forward in the *Phaedo* (pp. 323–446) and to the eschatological myths contained in the *Republic* (pp. 447–511); the text closes with an evaluation of Plato as the founder of rational psychology. This work, which was published towards the middle of

1791, was the result of research conducted by Tennemann during the Jena years; it is clearly influenced by an anti-Kantian orientation and, in its historiographical method, shows the influence of Meiners and Tiedemann.

Tennemann's interest in Kant's philosophy was aroused by Reinhold's *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie*, which he read after he had completed his own work; critical philosophy, he admits in the 'Vorrede' to the essay of 1791, might have provided a key to the interpretation of Plato. Unsatisfied with the text he had written, Tennemann resumed his work on Plato, this time adopting a systematic approach, and in the light of Reinhold's theory of the human capacity for representation. By March, 1792, the first volume of the *System der Platonischen Philosophie* [= *Syst.*] (Leipzig: bey Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1792, pp. XXXIV, 288) was ready for the press with the complete plan of the work laid out in detail in the 'Vorrede'. Compared with the first volume, the following volumes (II, 1794, pp. XVI, 347; III, 1794, pp. VI, 232; IV, 1795, pp. X, 301 [although sent to the press in December, 1794]) were published with a slight delay, owing to practical reasons.

During the same years that he worked on his *System*, Tennemann also published a number of short essays and articles concerning separate issues of Plato's philosophy, which he interpreted by constantly adopting the 'underlying thread' of Kantianism in its Reinholdian version: 'Versuch, eine Stelle aus dem *Timaeus* des Plato durch die Theorie des Vorstellungsvermögens zu erklären', *Neues philosophisches Magazin Erläuterungen und Anwendungen des Kantischen Systems bestimmt*, J.H. Abicht and F.G. Born eds., II/1-2 (1790), pp. 1-70; 'Ueber die älteste Revolution in der Philosophie mit Hinsicht auf die neueste', *ibid.*, II/3, 1791, pp. 213-291; 'Ueber den göttlichen Verstand aus der Platonischen Philosophie', *Memorabilien. Eine philosophisch-theologische Zeitschrift der Geschichte und Philosophie der Religionen, dem Bibelstudium und der morgenländischen Literatur gewidmet*, ed. H. E. G. Paulus, no. 1 (1791), pp. 34-64. In the same period he translated Plato's *Symposium*: 'Das Gastmahl von Plato, oder Gespräch über die Liebe, übersetzt aus dem Griechischen', *Neue Thalia*, ed. F. von Schiller, II (1792).

In 1793 Tennemann also published a new German translation of Hume's first *Enquiry*: *David Humes Untersuchung über den menschlichen Verstand [...] nebst einer Abhandlung über den philosophischen Skepticismus von Herrn Professor Reinhold* (Jena: im Verlag der akademischen Buchhandlung, 1793 [pp. III-XII, Tennemann's 'Vorrede'; pp. I\*-LII\*, Reinhold's *Ueber den philosophischen Skepticismus*; pp. 1-380, Hume's *Untersuchung über den menschlichen Verstand*]). A new translation, observed Tennemann in his 'Vorrede', might seem superfluous since there already exists the translation carried out by Johann Georg Sulzer in 1755; but this latter lacks precision and correctness, and, besides, a new edition of Hume's *Enquiries* had appeared in London in 1784; Ludwig Heinrich Jacob had just translated (1790-92) the *Treatise* – observes Tennemann – but this is an early work that Hume himself was not satisfied with (pp. VI-VIII); Hume's writings "arouse interest for two reasons [...]: first, because they contain one of the four possible philosophical systems [...]; second, because they constitute the immediate cause of the extraordinary revolution which is leading philosophy to the status of a science";

Reinhold's essay has the aim of illustrating scepticism as one of the typical forms of philosophical thinking, and of describing its relationship with critical philosophy (pp. IV and VI).

In 1795, with similar aims, Tennemann also translated Locke's *Essay: Locke's Versuch über den menschlichen Verstand, aus dem Englischen übersetzt mit einigen Anmerkungen und einer Abhandlung über den Empirismus in der Philosophie* von W.G. Tennemann, vol. 1 (Jena: im Verlag des Akademischen Leseinstituts, 1795), pp. XLVI, 536; vols 2–3 (Leipzig: bey Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1797), pp. 531 and pp. VI, 488 [Tennemann's study is on pp. 421–470 of vol. 3]). The translation of the *Essay* is justified by the emblematic meaning of Locke's work, which expresses a typical position existing in the philosophy of all ages, namely, empiricist dogmatism; Tennemann's essay is intended to explain the significance of empiricism in the history of philosophical thought.

In 1798 Tennemann published the first volume of his major work: *Geschichte der Philosophie* [= *Gesch.*] (Leipzig: bey Ambrosius Barth, 1798–1819), 11 volumes in 12 tomes. From this work, in 1812, Tennemann derived a compendium which enjoyed extraordinary success in Germany as well as in the rest of Europe, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Leipzig: bey Ambrosius Barth, 1812, 1816<sup>2</sup>). These works, which are Tennemann's major and most famous writings, will be examined at length later on.

Around 1798 Tennemann also published separate contributions, on Aristotle in particular: 'Ueber die ersten philosophischen Versuche bei den Griechen, vorzüglich des Plato und Aristoteles', *Psychologisches Magazin*, ed. C.C.E. Schmid, I (1796); 'Etwas über die Erinnerung', *Psychologisches Magazin*, II (1797); 'Aristoteles Physiognomik' [translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian work], *ibid.*; *Bemerkungen über die sogenannte große Ethik des Aristoteles* (Erfurt: bey Beyer und Maring, 1798, 1803<sup>2</sup>), pp. 232.

Tennemann also wrote reviews of histories of philosophy for Niethammer's *Philosophisches Journal* and the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*. The reviews of Tiedemann's *Geist* and Buhle's *Lehrbuch* and *Geschichte*, which appeared in the latter journal, are quite probably by Tennemann. In these two journals, respectively in 1795 and 1801, he also published anonymously two extensive surveys of the German historiography of philosophy produced in the last two decades of the century; several of the arguments formulated in these texts also appear in the 'Einleitung' to his major work: 'Uebersicht des Vorzüglichsten, was für die Geschichte der Philosophie seit 1780 geleistet worden', PhJ, II (1795), pp. 323–341; III (1795), pp. 66–94 (for the attribution to Tennemann, see PhJ, VII (1797), pp. 335–336); 'Revision der Bearbeitung der Geschichte der Philosophie in den letzten drey Quinquennien', ALZ/Erg., I, 2 (1801), cols 25–30, 31–64, and 529–549 (Tennemann's authorship is confirmed by Wendt in a note on p. 19 of the 1829 edition of the *Grundriss*).

In the Marburg years, during which he devoted himself almost exclusively to his great work, Tennemann also published the German translation of Degérando's work: *Vergleichende Geschichte der Systeme der Philosophie mit Rücksicht auf*

*die Grundsätze der menschlichen Erkenntnisse* [...]. Aus dem Französischen übersetzt mit Anmerkungen von W.G. Tennemann (Marburg: Neue Akademische Buchhandlung, 1806), 2 vols, pp. LII, 590 and pp. XIV, 530.

### 11.2.3 Historiographical Theory

As mentioned above, Kant's philosophy had remained substantially outside Tennemann's philosophical education. At Jena, between 1781 and 1787, his professor of philosophy had been Ulrich, a Leibnizian, and it was through his mediation that Tennemann gleaned some knowledge of critical philosophy, but that was all. After obtaining the degree of *Magister* in 1787, Tennemann devoted himself entirely to the study of Plato. When, in the first months of 1791, he published his first work, the extensive essay on Socrates' and Plato's doctrines of the immortality of the soul, his historiographical method seems to be already well-defined and presents several analogies with that of Tiedemann: criticism of sources, recourse to the texts written by the philosophers (including fragments) and to ancient sources, a broad introduction concerning the social and political conditions in Attica, to which frequent reference is also made in the course of the narrative. The philosophical ideas which seem to give direction to this research can be traced back to that psychologism which had Leibnizian roots and was typical of the *Spätaufklärung* and the *Popularphilosophen*.

But after the work was finished and ready for publication, Tennemann discovered, or rediscovered, Kant's philosophy. He himself explains in his 'Vorrede': "With shame I have to confess that only in recent times have I learnt to appreciate *critical philosophy* as it deserves, since in the past I had totally misunderstood it. While I was analysing Plato's arguments [for immortality] I started to have a clear sight of my previous blindness. If I had known critical philosophy before, it would certainly have been of avail to me for this work as well" (*Lehren*, p. VII; here, and in all subsequent quotations, the italics are Tennemann's). This new awareness was a result of Tennemann's reading of the *Briefe* written by Reinhold,<sup>44</sup> who taught Kant's philosophy at Jena from late 1787: "while I was concentrating on my work, some excellent writings were published, which, through my own fault, I read when it was too late because I was almost at the end of my work. Among these writings are, first of all, the *Letters on Kant's Philosophy*, which contain numerous reflections which are instructive for my subject as well. They would have made

<sup>44</sup>Most probably, Tennemann refers here to the eleventh *Brief* (vol. 1, Leipzig 1790, pp. 288–332, already published as the eighth *Brief* in the *Teutscher Merkur* in September 1787, 3, pp. 247–278); regarding this text by Reinhold, which presents a historical character and contains a history of the "rational psychology of the ancients", see K.L. Reinhold, *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, ed. K. Ameriks (Cambridge and New York, 2005), pp. XXXIII–XXXV, 104–123 and 201–205; see also A. PUPPI, *La formazione della filosofia di K.L. Reinhold* (Milan, 1966), pp. 93–103, and K. J. Marx, *The Usefulness of the Kantian Philosophy* (Berlin, 2011), pp. 158–167.

me understand that I had to focus primarily on the Platonic concept of the faculty of representation (*Vorstellungsvermögen*), and I would then have based this research on the foundation of his account of his doctrinal edifice, instead of proceeding without any organicity, as has been the case" (*Lehren*, pp. VII–VIII).

Tennemann's *System der Platonischen Philosophie*, completed shortly afterwards, is nothing other than an account of Plato's thought in a systematic form, using Reinhold's theory of the power of representation as a thread for reconstructing the system that does not exist in Plato's writings (as Tennemann himself recognizes).<sup>45</sup> From this point onwards Kantianism becomes the theoretical underpinning of his historiographical activity. He had already set out the criterion guiding his activity as a historian in the 'Vorrede' to the *System*: "There is no doubt that critical philosophy has disclosed the flaws and errors of this philosophy [Plato's] and has given a satisfying account for their emergence; but, on the other hand, it has also established a firm norm and a standpoint from which the value and interest of Plato's philosophy must be judged. The following truth can be clearly derived from the critical philosophy: each system of philosophy coming before it contains something true, which, nevertheless, is founded on a unilateral standpoint and is therefore mixed with something false. Distinguishing what is false from what is true is one of the several advantages provided by a thorough enquiry into the power of reason. It can thus be established that the more truth is contained by a system, the more that system comes closer to critical philosophy; and, conversely, the more a system comes closer to critical philosophy, the more it must be true" (*Syst.*, I, p. v).

Kant's critical philosophy, which is here identified with its Reinholdian version, is not only taken as the key to interpreting any philosophical event, but also relates to a particular conception of the historical development of philosophy. Kant was firmly convinced that he had brought about a decisive change in philosophy; a conviction equally shared by the Kantians. According to Reinhold – whose *Briefe*, as already observed, are at the source of Tennemann's conversion to Kantianism – critical philosophy was the point of arrival of a historical process and, at the same time, it was the result from which it was possible to determine the significance of the historical process which had produced it.<sup>46</sup> This conception of historical development and the hermeneutical use of critical philosophy, together with a firm adherence to the historiographical methodology elaborated by the tradition of the Enlightenment, are the fundamental elements of Tennemann's historiographical theory.

In addition to the brief remarks in the 'Vorrede' and spread throughout the text of the *System*, Tennemann provided his first formulation of a theory of the history of philosophy in the essay published in the *Philosophisches Journal* of 1795 (see *Uebersicht*, in particular pp. 323–333). A more complete and coherent formulation

<sup>45</sup>On the structure of the work, cf. J.-L. Vieillard-Baron, 'Le système de la philosophie platonicienne de Tennemann', *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, LXXVIII (1973), pp. 513–524 (repr. in Id., *Platonisme et interprétation de Platon à l'époque moderne* (Paris, 1988), pp. 78–90).

<sup>46</sup>See above, pp. 771–773.

can be found in the long ‘Einleitung’ to his *Geschichte*. We shall therefore regularly refer to this latter text, while referring to his other theoretical writings on occasion, if necessary.

The discovery of the critical method led to a revolution in the field of philosophy, laying the foundations for philosophy as a science, but it also brought about a turning point in the realm of the historiography of philosophy. There is no *scientific* history of philosophy without a *propaedeutics* capable of determining the concept and establishing the method of the history of philosophy itself. Not just the history of philosophy, but all science presupposes a propaedeutic stage. Tennemann’s Kantianism can be seen in his approach to the problem: “propaedeutics in general is the set of concepts and rules presupposed by a science; it provides a guide for the elaboration, exposition, and study of that science, and defines the most appropriate method for all this, thus excluding any arbitrary and disorderly procedure” (*Gesch.*, I, pp. v–vi; cf. Santinello, ‘Kant e Tennemann’, pp. 323–324). That the historical sciences are also in need of a propaedeutic, or a preliminary reflection providing them with the rules for the method, “is a truth about which in the past there was little or no reflection at all, but today this conviction is becoming more and more widespread” (*Gesch.*, I, p. III; see *Revision*, col. 543). It is not enough to introduce an order into the facts; it is certain that facts constitute the content of history, but they are not simply there, ready to be used; it is first necessary to gather them, and “both operations” – collecting facts and organizing them into a unitary narrative – “are not to be performed randomly but according to fixed rules, if our purpose is to turn the chaos of the materials into a whole, which not only engages memory, but also satisfies the understanding” (*Gesch.*, I, p. III; see *Revision*, cols 25–26).

In the past, at least up to and including Brucker, historians of philosophy had no clear idea of the foundations of their discipline: they proceeded to gather materials without any definite plan, amassing everything they came across, thus vastly increasing the amount of works that were mere compilations; and their elaboration of these materials was just as deficient as their collection of those materials (*Gesch.*, I, p. IV). It was only towards the end of the century, Tennemann observes, that there started to appear a few separate contributions intended to offer a preliminary reflection on the foundations of the history of philosophy. But if the latter is to become a science, then it is necessary to raise this preliminary analysis, in a systematic form, to the level of reflection: the limits of historiographical activity have their roots precisely in the lack of adequate critical reflection on the subject. The analogy of this approach with that adopted by critical philosophy is clear: in the history of philosophy, just like in any other discipline, we can only advance by uncertain attempts, up to the point when we possess a definite methodological principle capable of guiding research in the field and of orienting the discipline thereafter on the secure path of science.

Formulating methodical rules for a science entails the exact determination of the concept of its object. For this reason, “propaedeutics consists of two parts: a theory of the history of philosophy and a doctrine of its method”; the first part, the



theory, determines “the concept, extent, content, form, aim, and use of the history of philosophy”; the second part, deriving it from the first, develops a methodology meant for the history of philosophy. For Tennemann, methodology is the newest part of the propaedeutics he intends to outline; in recent times, he explains, the concept of the history of philosophy has been debated in some way by historians like Buhle and Tiedemann, as well as in separate essays explicitly devoted to this theme by Garve first and then by Kantians like Reinhold, Fülleborn, Goeß, and Grohmann<sup>47</sup>; there is no doubt that, in these attempts, “the determination of the concept of history of philosophy is still very uncertain and the theory incomplete”, but even less has been done with regard to methodology (I, p. VI).

<sup>47</sup>Tennemann refers to the following essays: K.L. Reinhold, ‘Ueber den Begriff der Geschichte der Philosophie’, BGPh, no. 1. (1791), pp. 5–35 (on this essay, cf. Pupi, *La formazione*, pp. 308–313); G.F.D. Goess, *Ueber den Begriff der Geschichte der Philosophie und über das System des Thales* (Erlangen: Palm, 1794); G.G. Fülleborn, ‘Was heißt den Geist einer Philosophie darstellen’, BGPh, no. 5 (1795), pp. 193–203; C.A. Grohmann, *Ueber den Begriff der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Wittenberg: Kühne, 1798); Id., ‘Was heißt: Geschichte der Philosophie’, *Neue Beyträge zur kritischen Philosophie und insbesondere zur Geschichte der Philosophie*, C.A. Grohmann und K.H.L. Pölitze eds., I (1798), pp. 1–78. In addition to these writings, he names the two following methodological essays by C. Garve: *De ratione scribendi historiam philosophiae* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1768), and *Legendorum philosophorum veterum praecepta nonnulla et exemplum* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1770); surprisingly, neither here nor elsewhere does Tennemann make any reference to Brucker’s ‘Dissertatio praeliminaris’; this is explained by the thesis that only after the kantian ‘revolution’ could the history of philosophy become an object for explicit and conscious theoretical reflection. In his ‘Einleitung’, he merely mentions Reinhold’s essay and discusses Grohmann’s former essay; he provides a more complete discussion of these theoretical essays in the *Uebersicht* and the *Revision*, where he also examines the methodological and theoretical contributions which appear in Tiedemann’s *Geist* and Buhle’s *Lehrbuch*. These discussions have been defined as ‘Methodenstreit’ (cf. L. Geldsetzer, ‘Der Methodenstreit in der Philosophiegeschichtsschreibung: 1791–1820’, *Kant-Studien*, LVI, 1966, pp. 519–527; Geldsetzer, pp. 19–46; see also S. Di Bella, *La storia della filosofia nell’Aetas Kantiana* Naples, 2008). In reality, the value of these contributions is varied, and they owe their success to Tennemann, who grouped them together under the definition “writings on the concept of history of philosophy”, and included them in the bibliography prefaced to his *Geschichte* (pp. LXXVIII–LXXIX) and the *Grundriss* (§ 2, p. 2); from this source, they were taken up and incorporated in the bibliographical sections of many later manuals, and finally in Freyer’s history of the historiography of philosophy (cf. Freyer, pp. 123–136 and p. [1] [‘Literatur’]). In the *Grundriss* of 1812, besides the aforementioned theoretical texts, Tennemann cites his own ‘Einleitung’, as well as the following essays: C. Weiss, *Ueber die Behandlungsart der Geschichte der Philosophie auf Universitäten* (Leipzig: Kramer, 1799); F.A. Carus, ‘Ideen zur Geschichte der Philosophie’, in *Nachgelassene Werke* (Berlin: Barth u. Kummer, 1809), vol. 4; and C.F. Bachmann, *Ueber Philosophie und ihre Geschichte* (Jena: Cröker, 1811). In any case, these writings denote the interest felt by Kantians towards the problem of a critical foundation of the history of philosophy. In addition to the works quoted by Tennemann, let us mention K.H. Heydenreich, *Einige Ideen über die Revolution in der Philosophie, bewirkt durch Immanuel Kant, und besonders über den Einfluß derselben auf die Behandlung der Geschichte der Philosophie*, in the appendix to his translation of Buonafede’s history of modern philosophy (*Kritische Geschichte der Revolutionen in der Philosophie in den drei letzten Jahrhunderten* (Leipzig: Weygand, 1791), II, pp. 213–232).

### 11.2.3.1 The Concept of the History of Philosophy

The aim of the ‘Theory’ is to determine the concept of the history of philosophy, which is “a composite concept, whose marks can only be found by means of an exposition of the two fundamental concepts that make it up, that of *history* and that of *philosophy*”. After the Kantian revolution in philosophy, many set themselves the task of providing a definition of this concept, contenting themselves however with an account of one of its constitutive marks, the concept of philosophy, and assuming that this also contained a definition of the ‘history of philosophy’. According to Tennemann, there is no doubt that to set out the concept of philosophy is “the most difficult part of this work, but it is certainly not all of it”: the correct process requires the concept being subdivided into its marks which in turn constitute concepts that must be defined; it is only through a complete account of the constitutive marks of a concept that it is possible to elucidate it in all its internal subdivisions (*Gesch.*, I, pp. VII–VIII; see *Uebersicht*, pp. 325–326; *Revision*, cols 27–28 and 529–532).

But the Kantians also erred in determining the concept of philosophy: “in the determination of the concept, an important difference has been neglected, namely, that the *history* of philosophy needs a *concept* [of philosophy] *different* from that needed for a *rigorously scientific system of philosophy*, and that the concept which has to be placed at the summit of the history of philosophy must be different from that which completes its scientific construction. This latter concept – which displays the marks of philosophy as a science with the utmost precision and sharply demarcates philosophy from non-philosophy, and that which has to be taken into account from that which has to be excluded – restricts the content of the history of philosophy too much to be adopted as a guiding thread. Indeed, the history of a science which is already perfect should not only present the successful discoveries which enabled that science to increase the value of its content or form, but also the vain attempts and mistakes; and, more in general, it cannot fail to record the great amount of material which, according to a strictly scientific concept, would be excluded from the content of that science”. If this applies to the history of any science, “all the more it must apply to philosophy, a discipline which was laid on the safe path of science only in later times, after abandoning with difficulty false and redundant routes, and whose most diligent devotees were destined, in almost all cases, to grasp truth only by halves or unilaterally” (*Gesch.*, I, pp. VIII–IX).

According to Tennemann, the fact that the adoption of the scientific concept of philosophy, namely, the concept of philosophy as a perfect and accomplished science, is of no use in the history of philosophy, was demonstrated, paradoxically, by Grohmann, who, “starting from the concept of philosophy as a science, and thereby designating both the concept of the history of philosophy and its content and form, eventually defines it as a *systematic presentation of the necessary systems, which excludes all that which is contingent, changeable, and temporal succession itself*”. But the history of philosophy is unthinkable without these determinations: if this method were applied to its ultimate consequences, thus contradicting the

definition given by Grohmann himself, “we would finally speak not of *necessary* systems, but rather of *a single system*” (*Gesch.*, I, p. IX; cf. also *Revision*, cols 532–533). Tennemann believes that Grohmann, like other Kantians, errs because he relies on a concept of philosophy which, in reality, represents the point of arrival of the history of philosophy. Grohmann errs, therefore, not because, in order to define the concept of the history of philosophy, he adopts a concept of philosophy which applies only to a specific system of thought, hence a concept which is too “limited”, but because he adopts the completed, perfect concept of philosophy, that which philosophy finds only at its end, when it is transformed into a rigorous science, and, for this reason, cannot be adopted as that from which the history of philosophy takes its rise and starts its long itinerary towards science.

After this preliminary part, Tennemann develops his propaedeutic. His concern for systematic completeness makes Tennemann’s account rather convoluted and repetitive. At the beginning, a series of paragraphs is devoted to the concept of “history in general” (§§ 3–4); there follows a discussion of the concept of “the history of a science in general” (§§ 5–12), the “proximate genus, within which the history of philosophy is found”; then comes a discussion of the concept of the history of philosophy (§§ 13–32). The ‘Theory’ thus ends with a definition of the concept, and there follows the ‘Methodology’ (§§ 33–46), in which a series of methodical rules are drawn from the concept; the ‘Introduction’ is closed by a third part devoted to the “literature concerning the history of philosophy” (§§ 47–55).

#### A. *Science and the history of the science*

Tennemann starts from the definition of the concept of ‘history’ in general. History is the “account of a series of facts which constitute a totality”; a series is formed as a whole, as a “homogeneous series” of facts, by the relationship of each of its constitutive elements to one and the same object; the relationship which grants unity to the series and allows us to distinguish it from all the others can only be a relation of cause and effect. Hence, it is not enough to affirm that events are arranged in time; the temporal succession must be further determined according to the connection of cause and effect (*Gesch.*, I, pp. XI–XII). ‘History’ is distinguished from ‘chronicle’ or annals because the latter limit themselves to “designating” events according to a merely temporal succession, that is, in a chronological order, whereas history illustrates them in the temporal series; annals record *what* happened, history also tells *how* something happened: “history must illustrate the series of events [...] according to their real relation in time. All facts are interrelated by a connection of cause and effect, and only by that they constitute a temporal series according to which they are related in time as being antecedent, subsequent, or concurrent. Although facts, considered in themselves, are just fortuitous occurrences, nevertheless, in their being connected and in their mutual relations there is a sort of necessity, which stands out the more evidently, the more the whole series is presented in a complete form. There is no contradiction in viewing the separate events as not having occurred, if we set each of them apart from others, or else in replacing them by other events; it is only with respect to their mutual relations, and to the time relations by which they are interconnected, that the

more clear and complete is the form in which the series of events and their mutual relations are grasped and related, and the more the extrinsic character of fortuity disappears" (I, pp. XII–XIII).

As said above, the history of a science is the proximate genus within which the history of philosophy is placed. By 'science' we mean an ordered system of items of knowledge which are connected according to principles: "the systematic order by virtue of which a science is distinguished from a mere aggregate is the *essential character of any science* [ . . . ]. This idea of science, thanks to which reason outlines its architectural plan, is of the utmost importance for the science itself. Indeed, it is only when this idea [the plan of the scientific edifice] is clearly developed that reason can manage not only to enlarge the content, but also to grant a definite scientific form to the whole. And should it be impossible to do all this at one time, we can still work on the completion of a science with assured results only when its profile has been outlined in a correct form. Otherwise, no step forward can be taken without the risk of being forced back again and of having thus worked in vain" (I, pp. XIV–XV; see Kant, *KrV*, A 834 B 862). The history of a science comes to a turning point when we discover a methodical principle which enables us to outline the plan of the edifice; henceforth we stop proceeding hesitantly and begin a linear and uninterrupted progress. All sciences have gone through this "destiny": "that which should come first usually happens last, and in most cases only repeated failed attempts incite reason to test all the previous efforts again and again until it happens to sketch the plan which is architecturally right according to principles" (*Gesch.*, I, pp. XV–XVI; see Kant, *KrV*, A 834–835 B 862–863); after which the indefinite progress of that science can finally start.

Once he has defined the concept of science, Tennemann proceeds to determine the concept of the history of a science in general (§ 6), its content (§ 7), its form (§ 8), and its four fundamental laws, namely: the observance of both the temporal succession (§ 8) and the historical truth of facts (§ 9), the need to always grasp both the causal connections between facts, i.e. the "pragmatic spirit of history" (§ 10), and the relationship between each fact and the endpoint of history, which is the formation of a science, or the "finality of history" (§ 11). Here Tennemann largely anticipates, with regard to the history of a science in general, what he will say just below with regard to the history of philosophy, which is the history of a particular science: since sciences are numerous and differ from one another as to their objects, it is necessary to determine, for the history of each of them, a "specific propaedeutic" by referring to that which is specific to each science with respect to both content and form (§ 12).

#### B. *The "matter" of the history of philosophy*

If we therefore proceed to determine the concept of the history of that particular science which is philosophy, the first thing to do is to find a concept of philosophy which is appropriate to this purpose: indeed, "the need and disposition to philosophize is given to man by reason, which, even in its lower degrees, manifests itself as being the faculty of linking in a unity the multiplicity of representations, of enquiring, and of acting according to principles and purposes" (*Gesch.*, I, p. XXVI).

The objects of philosophizing concern either *that which is* or *that which must be*. The totality of the objects of the first kind is *nature*; in a rational being, the idea of *must be* pertains to an “inexplicable fundamental force”, namely, *freedom*: “hence, *nature* and *freedom* designate the entire range of knowledge, whose ultimate foundations and laws constitute the object of philosophy. *The science of the ultimate foundations and laws of nature and freedom and of their mutual relations* is the *idea*, which is inseparable from reason and therefore should be kept in view by every thinker” (I, pp. XXVI–XXVII).

For Tennemann this broad concept of philosophy, which clearly derives from Kant and Reinhold, even if it is not “a rigorously scientific concept of philosophy”, is still sufficient for the history of philosophy “if it indicates to us the starting point and the point of arrival of the effort made by philosophizing reason, and determines the field within which it is active, as well as the aim which must be reached. The concept stated above allows all of this” (I, p. XXVII). Philosophy is the science of the foundations and laws of nature and freedom; this definition is sufficient for the history of philosophy: the object, ‘nature’ and ‘freedom’, provides us with the content, and the mark ‘science’ gives us the form of philosophy; this is “just enough to distinguish the realm of philosophy from that of other sciences, while leaving still enough room for several and more rigorous determinations that can only ensue from much deep research – which could not be the starting point of philosophizing reason – and that, precisely on this account, cannot be introduced into the definition of the concept of history because, in this case, it would exclude all that which cannot withstand the severest criticism [...] and therefore would not encompass the preparatory work but only the results. A large part of history would be thus excluded, or rather annulled” (I, pp. XXVII–XXVIII).

This concept, judged by Tennemann to be sufficiently general, allows us to consider history as the “gradual fulfilment of philosophy” and to evaluate the various attempts to fulfil the idea of philosophy: “all philosophizing is a striving inclination of reason to fulfil this idea of science; and all philosophy, which develops out of the latter, relates to that idea and can be evaluated only in relation to that idea: to what extent it is commensurate with it, how close it comes and how far it stays behind when compared with the ideal that reason has fixed as the purpose of its uninterrupted progress [...]. And since philosophy as a science has not arisen all at once but little by little, and is the result of many thinkers, who subsequently aimed their thought at this purpose, hence we may think of a history describing this progressing culture of reason and the gradual formation of philosophy [...]. The history of philosophy is [...] the description of the attempts made by reason to fulfil the idea of a *science of the principles and ultimate laws of freedom*. *Philosophizing* is older than the *philosophies*; and it relates to philosophy just as the *striving inclination* relates to the *aim* of this striving” (I, pp. XXVIII–XXIX).

“The matter of the history of philosophy is all that which refers to the activity of reason towards the fulfilment of the idea of philosophy”; *directly*, the object of the history of philosophy is “thought itself [...], in a word, philosophizing” (I, p. XXX), which, however, in this as in all other sciences, takes place, as it were, “inside man” and “becomes visible to the searching eye in the works of the spirit, which

are its result” (I, p. XVIII). Hence, *indirectly*, the history of philosophy must also consider the philosophers themselves, as well as the external circumstances: “since philosophizing pertains to history only in so far as it can be proved historically and thinkers have brought it into the realm of historical knowledge, or in other words, in so far as reason has manifested itself in the philosophers themselves, in whom it becomes modified by their individuality and by external relations, for this reason, even those *facts relating to philosophers and their relationships* belong – *mediately* (*mittelbar*) – to the matter of the history of philosophy” (I, pp. XXX–XXXI).

Among the external factors that have conditioned philosophy through the personalities who practised it are, in the first place, the “spiritual education” and “character” of the thinkers, factors which are in turn the result of various circumstances and external situations, such as the political and social conditions, the state of culture, and even the language in which a philosopher thinks and writes (I, pp. XXXVI–XXXVII). Undoubtedly, this can involve the risk of increasing the materials to such an extent that the historian is no longer able to master them or the reader to orient himself in them. In reality, the distinction between that which is directly the object of the history of philosophy and that which concerns the latter only indirectly also has the function of introducing a criterion of selection in the choice of materials: the need for completeness in their collection is a factor relating to the primary aim of a history of philosophy, which has to “show the gradual formation of philosophy as a science”, in such a way that all that which may be an obstacle to the fulfilment of this aim – such as the excessive and not clearly circumscribed accumulation of materials – must be eliminated by applying the methodical rule which distinguishes between indirect and direct sources and subordinates the former to the latter (I, pp. XXXVII–XXXVIII).

### C. The “form” of the history of philosophy

The historian should collect all the material for the history of philosophy and should organise it systematically, both as regards that which directly constitutes its object (like systems and philosophemes) and that which is merely of interest indirectly, namely, those circumstances which influenced the personalities of philosophers. Tennemann expressed himself clearly in his ‘Vorrede’: “the history of philosophy, as evident in the term itself, can be neither the history of philosophers nor the history of philosophemes. It comprises them both, but both are intended for a higher object and are considered from a particular standpoint” (I, ‘Vorrede’, p. [5]). What is most important, therefore, is the *form* which is given to this matter in the course of the historical narrative. The *form* of the history of philosophy is provided by the relations linking the historical facts, which Tennemann groups into four properties: “temporal succession, truth and determinateness, the pragmatic spirit, and finality: all this, if considered together, constitutes the form of the history of philosophy” (I, pp. XXXVIII–XXXIX). As we have previously observed, these four properties had already been anticipated in the definition of the concept of the history of a science (§§ 8–12) and were to be resumed – in the form of rules for a historiographical method – in the *Methodenlehre*.

(i) *Temporal succession*

Temporal succession, which is the first of the properties of the form assigned to the history of philosophy, is none other than the observance of chronology; this is required by the very character of history, even though, in the history of philosophy, the observance of chronology is to be subordinated to other higher viewpoints: “it is certainly necessary for the facts to be presented exactly according to the order in which they succeeded one another, but this must occur in such a way that a coherent series shall not be interrupted by inserting another series”; the thought produced by a philosopher constitutes a totality and should be set out according to its internal connection; this also applies to systems that are interconnected according to relations of causal dependence; the unity of the account should never be interrupted, even though, for that particular period, other thinkers have formulated systems oriented in a different direction (I, p. XXXIX). According to Tennemann, what is most important is not the mere temporal succession, which in fact pertains more to chronicle than to history, but the temporal succession in the relations of cause and effect. This position was to have important consequences, as we shall see in more detail later on, in the section devoted to periodization. But already at this stage Tennemann observes that “the history of philosophy is divided into several sections, each of which constitutes a partial totality and which, as a whole, form the history of philosophy. The synchronic order (*synchronistische Ordnung*) concerns the connection of sections within a whole, but not the separate sections themselves” (I, p. XL; see also *Uebersicht*, pp. 329–330).

(ii) “*Historical truth*” and “*logical truth*”

“Truth” and “determinateness” constitute, respectively, that which Tennemann also defines as the “historical truth” and “logical truth” of philosophemes, which are the facts presented by the history of philosophy. The historical truth of philosophemes can only be ensured by a strict observance of sources, first of all the texts produced by philosophers: “the historical truth is required not only by external facts but also by internal ones. Thought itself, with its principles and consequences, must be justified by means of documentary evidence” (*Gesch.*, I, p. XLI). But it is not enough for the historical truth of philosophemes to be proved by recourse to documents: in addition, philosophemes “must be set out according to the sense and spirit specific to their author”. This is what Tennemann calls – as opposed to the simple “historical truth” – the “logical truth and determinateness” of philosophemes: “according to this law, history must place us inside the perspective of a thinker and show us the goal pursued by that thinker in his full individuality, it must set out his statements adopting his spirit and according to his correlations, trace back his concepts to their distinguishing marks, and enunciate his theories considering their connection and their succession” (I, pp. XLI–XLII; see also, with regard to the history of a science in general, I, p. XXI).

(iii) “*Pragmatic*” history

The “pragmatic spirit” concerns the logical connections according to which the thoughts elaborated by philosophers should be presented in a history of

philosophy.<sup>48</sup> These connections may be viewed from three perspectives. First, philosophemes, considered in themselves, are related to one another as a principle to a consequence: “A philosopheme may contain the matter for another philosopheme, it may determine the matter or form of a new edifice, or it may likewise be determined by another philosopheme”; hence, a series of philosophemes constitutes a chain, in which one philosopheme leads to another, although this link is “at times more evident and at other times more concealed, at times complete, and at other times incomplete” (I, p. XLII; see also I, p. XXII). Secondly, philosophemes “are related to the human spirit, and particularly to reason, by a causal relationship. All philosophemes arise from the tendency of reason to bring unity to the entirety of human knowledge and to trace everything back to principles or derive everything from principles. This is a need and a law of reason, and as soon as reason attains knowledge of itself, this natural need becomes irrepressible”; the action of reason is not devoid of rules, however, and obeys the primary laws of the spirit: “philosophemes are therefore related to the human spirit according to a relation of causal dependence, since they derive from it and are subordinated to its laws”. But the causal relation operates conversely as well: thought itself, once performed, operates backwards on the source from which it arises, namely reason, thus contributing in various forms to educating the spirit itself: “the faculty of thinking finds new material here and stimulation to think, and hence it develops new points of view, clarifies for itself the laws of thought, and draws from them appropriate or erroneous methods” (I, pp. XLII–XLIII; see also p. XXIII). The third aspect is the relationship between the human spirit and all those external circumstances which may exert an influence, whether positive or negative, on its culture and education, such as political structures, freedom of thought, or else the limitations to which the latter may be subjected, religion, the moral condition of a nation, or the state of scientific culture: “in so far as these causes affect the human spirit, philosophemes are in a causal relation to them” (I, pp. XXIV and XLIII).

If philosophemes are not logically connected according to this threefold relation – that is, related to one another and each related to the spirit and, indirectly, to external events – the history of philosophy is reduced to chronicle, a mere list of facts; it is only by virtue of these logical connections between facts that the history of philosophy acquires a “pragmatic value”, that is to say, it presents facts according to precise causal links, and becomes a history worthy of the name (I, pp. XLIII–XLIV).

<sup>48</sup>A “pragmatic” history displays the causal arising of one event from another (see *Gesch.*, I, pp. XXI–XXIII; *Uebersicht*, p. 330). On the meaning and history of the expression “pragmatic history”, cf. P. Pédech, *La méthode historique de Polybe* (Paris, 1964), pp. 21–22; on the use of this term in German historiography of the late eighteenth century, with reference to Tennemann as well, cf. A. Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* (Paris, 1960<sup>8</sup>), pp. 1272–1274, and G. Kühne-Bertram, ‘Pragmatisch’, in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, vol. 4, cols 1243–1244; on the concept of “pragmatic” history in the philosophical historiography of the late eighteenth century, see above, pp. 536–537, 794–795.



(iv) *The finality of history*

The fourth property assigned to the form of the history of philosophy is “finality”. For Tennemann, this property is the most important of the four. It is certain that the first three properties are necessary conditions for the unity of the history of philosophy, but they still do not allow us to consider it as a whole: the unity of the history of philosophy “is fulfilled through the *reference to the idea of philosophy as a science*” (*Gesch.*, I, p. XLIV; see also § 11, pp. XXIV–XXV; *Uebersicht*, pp. 330–331). Temporal connection, historical truth, and the logical truth of philosophical facts, pragmatic spirit: all this allows us to grasp philosophical facts in their truth and in the variety of their causal connections, but still does not allow us to consider these facts as stages of a single path, of a unitary process, by which it is possible to fulfil that purpose which gives sense to the whole and in light of which all events can be judged. This is what is expected from the history of a science, on a general level: it must present “the process of the formation of a science” and, “to attain this end, it is necessary to emphasize the relation on which the whole is based and thereby give unity to the many. This *unity* is none other than the constant reference to the *idea of science*” (*Gesch.*, I, p. XXIV). It is only reference to the ultimate end of the historical process that gives unity to the whole and enables the moment of judgement to take place: “if the idea of science is not always preserved within the living consciousness [of the historian], and if each single fact does not draw attention to this effort which is the object of all efforts, then the spirit disperses itself on separate details, one fact replaces another, and the whole vanishes like the images of a magic lantern”. It is not enough for the historian, from time to time, to estimate the progress made, establishing the state of the science and the results attained; it is necessary for the history as a whole to be compiled in such a way “as to make evident, immediately and throughout, the formation of the science as the ultimate result [of history]” (I, p. XXV).

With respect to the history of philosophy, this means that the latter is possible as the representation of a unitary process only on the basis of a clear knowledge of the object which is the aim of the efforts, whether deliberate or not, of all thinkers. Now, what this object is, has become clear after the advent of the critical philosophy. For Tennemann, critical philosophy provides a propaedeutic to philosophy, which, by defining with scientific exactitude its “concept, extension, contents, and method”, finally places it on the reliable path of science. Critical philosophy obviously does not yet constitute the complete edifice of philosophy as a science, but it has *already* outlined the plan of this edifice with scientific precision; now philosophers can create their buildings according to a plan, relying on a clear ‘idea’ of their object and possessing a reliable methodological principle. If, on a philosophical level, the discovery of the critical method represents the birth of philosophy as a science and the beginning of its progress on the safe route of science, on a historiographical level, the idea of philosophy as a science provides the historian with a reliable criterion of judgement and a point of reference which can unify the variety and multiplicity of historical facts (*Revision*, cols 27–28; see *Uebersicht*, pp. 332–333).

Reference to the purpose of philosophizing reason, as defined once and for all by critical philosophy, provides a criterion for interpreting history, or rather that which is rational in history, which is what should be reported in a scientific history of philosophy: “that unity which is already expressed in the concept of the history of a science, can be introduced into the history of philosophy only by the unity of the aim towards which reason actively operates. By virtue of this unity, all systems and theories, all attempts and efforts – although diverging from one another as to content and form, and whether successful or not – and even mistakes are granted the possibility of referring to a definite point, which is the rational idea of philosophy. For this reason, everything within the history of philosophy must be referred to this idea; only by adopting this reference as a thread is it possible to follow the labyrinthine and enigmatic itinerary of reason and distinguish the progress and regress on the path of science” (*Gesch.*, I, p. XLV).

The rule of *finality* – the fourth property assigned to the history of philosophy, with respect to its form, and the most important of them because it identifies its specific mark<sup>49</sup> – imposes that each philosopheme must be considered in its relation to the idea of philosophy as a science and thereby also offers “a reliable standard for the definition of the difference between a history of philosophy and those works, either of a historical or a scientific character, that are similar to it; it offers a correct point of view for choosing, relating, and subdividing the materials, and, finally, it offers a definite rule to form a judgement about the actual worth of all histories of philosophy” (I, pp. XLV–XLVI).

The history of philosophy is distinguished from the “literary history of philosophy”, which deals with the lives of philosophers, their works, and the reception of these works. The materials employed are the same, but the history of philosophy subordinates them to a higher perspective: “the literary history contents itself with pointing out the merits and notable features of the individual philosophers, whereas the history of philosophy considers everything in relation to the formation and development of philosophy as a science. Here everything is centred upon science, there upon the philosopher”. But the history of philosophy is also distinguished from a “*simple presentation of philosophical systems*, which totally lacks a historical character”. There is no doubt that philosophical systems can be judged from the viewpoint of their internal coherence, “regardless of their genesis and formation”, and can be classified according to merely logical rules and schemes; but this is “neither the history of systems nor the history of philosophy, but just a philosophical analysis of systems. The history of philosophy certainly presents systems as well, but it shows how they arose, according to temporal succession, and how they relate to the idea of philosophy as a science. In short, the presentation of systems relates to the history of philosophy just as a deduction from principles (*Deduktion aus Gründen*) relates to a historical account (*Geschichtserzählung*)” (I, pp. XLVI–XLVII).

<sup>49</sup>“Ohne die erste [die Zeitfolge], zweite [die Wahrheit und Bestimmtheit] und dritte [der pragmatische Geist] ist *keine Geschichte*, ohne die vierte [die Zweckmäßigkeit] *keine Geschichte der Philosophie* möglich” (I, p. XXXIX).

#### D. *The use of history: system and history*

The final paragraphs of the 'Theory' (§§ 28–32) deal with the worth and use of the history of philosophy, and in this regard too the mark "finality" has a decisive role. It is in response to a natural desire that, faced with an object which presents itself to his spirit, man asks himself "how and by which route has it become what it is; and should this desire to know not arise with respect to that science towards which the human reason has always directed its efforts?" (I, p. XLIX). But this is not merely an erudite question: the history of philosophy has its own speculative use and forms part of the complete and perfect system of knowledge. Philosophy as a scientific system might not be described as complete if it did not include, as a part of itself, the history of its gradual establishment as a science. Here Tennemann seems to be referring to a thesis previously held by Kant, who thought that the history of pure reason forms part of the system (see Kant, *KrV*, A852 B880). The interest that inclines reason toward the accomplishment and perfecting of philosophy as a science "also forces it to trace back those steps it has taken forwards, and thus give account of the totality of its culture and its activity". The steps taken by reason during the course of its history certainly do not always appear to be "*steps forward*" (*Fortschritte*); often, and indeed for the most part, they seem to be nothing more than "*false steps*" (*Fehlritte*); nevertheless, it is highly interesting, both from a speculative and a historical point of view, to trace back the tormented path of reason. "Indeed, everything depends on the form given to the treatment" (*Gesch.*, I, pp. XLIX–L): the history of this, just like that of any other science, can only be reconstructed in view of the final end towards which it tends and which now, thanks to the critical philosophy, has become known to us.

Here Tennemann comes back to the rule of finality. A history of philosophy conceived of as a "mere register of the false steps taken by reason" is barely more instructive than a "novel which is unable to recount anything about the hero except trifles, without awakening any interest by philosophical observations and reflections". But a scientific history of philosophy, in so far as its content is concerned, even when it reports what may appear to be simple mistakes, as is quite often the case, has nothing in common with such a novel: "indeed, the cases when [reason] is confused are themselves frequently the real but unilateral discoveries and nothing but the consequence of a legitimate effort of reason, grounded on its very nature, which committed an error merely because the end and the means appropriate for its fulfilment could only be established after many attempts, including those which failed" (I, p. L). The history of philosophy is therefore a part of the scientific system of complete, perfect, and definitive philosophy; the history of reason is not identified with the system, in the sense that reason cannot infer its own history *a priori*, but it is neither a mere chronicle or a list of facts. Between history and system there exists a sort of parallel: the results reached by the history of philosophy agree with those reached by philosophy as a scientific system; the history of philosophy, on the level proper to it, provides a confirmation of the truth of the system, whereas philosophy as a scientific system – which constitutes the point of arrival of that historical development – provides a key to the interpretation of

history, that criterion by which history alone can be reconstructed. The historian must of course stick to the facts, but these, the facts of the past, are to be viewed in turn in light of the end which was reached. Historiography, when elevated to the dignity of a science, recognizes reason as the sole criterion for interpreting history, thus merging historical research and theoretical demonstration into a single sphere (see also Braun, pp. 245–246).

### 11.2.3.2 The Methodical Rules

From the theory of the history of philosophy Tennemann derives his historiographical methodology, that is to say, “the rules for finding, elaborating, and connecting materials into a whole”. These he subdivides into “general rules”, valid for any kind of historiography, and “particular rules”, relating to the particular object of that specific history; and again, into rules concerning the first phase of historical work, finding the materials (*Gesch.*, §§ 34–40), and the rules concerning the next phase, the elaboration and narration of the materials in a complete whole (§§ 41–45).

#### A. *The choice of materials*

As far as finding and collecting the materials for the history of philosophy is concerned, it is important to know beforehand “what we are looking for. The spirit of research thus adopts a standpoint which guarantees it against uncertain groping in the dark, wandering around aimlessly, and piling up facts at random”. The historian of philosophy must therefore have at his disposal some “reliable standpoints” which enable him to undertake a more accurate study of the sources and attain more definite results. These standpoints are none other than “certain rubrics” under which to collect the materials, and “precise questions” whose answers can only be found by locating the material contained in the sources (I, p. LV). In §§ 17–19, Tennemann had already explained what these “rubrics” and “questions” are, so he refers the reader to these explanations. One set of questions or rubrics under which to collect the materials (§ 19) concerns that which constitutes the *indirect* matter of the history of philosophy, such as the biographical events in the lives of philosophers, their culture, their temperament, the language they used, the social and political conditions, and the state of the scientific culture of their time. There is nothing particularly new here with respect to the historiographical tradition of the Enlightenment.

Another set of questions (§ 18) concerns that which is *directly* the object of the history of philosophy, and here Tennemann’s dependence on the theoretical presuppositions of Kantianism is clear. The questions the historian must ask the sources concern first of all the “concept of philosophy” of a thinker, the rigour and precision with which he outlined the domain of philosophy with respect to that of the other sciences, and the division of the system into parts and their subordination. Furthermore, it is necessary to ask whether the philosopher addressed the problem of the conditions of possibility of philosophy as a science, with what method he proceeded in elaborating his system, either analytically from the conditioned to the conditions or synthetically from the conditions to the conditioned; and so on. The

questions Tennemann asks the sources and takes as the starting point from which to collect the materials clearly depend on a conception of philosophy deriving, at least in its formal and architectural aspects, from Kantianism. The sources of the history of philosophy are primarily constituted by the texts written by philosophers themselves, and it is from these texts that we have to derive philosophemes, which, as previously said, are the direct matter of the history of philosophy. Tiedemann had already stressed the importance of reading the works of philosophers directly, even the fragments of the more ancient philosophers, instead of reading indirect testimonies; like Buhle, Tennemann also follows this trend, which represents a clear departure from the tradition of the past. Only afterwards, should one turn to writings about the philosophers, such as testimonies, critical literature, and historiographical works of other kinds, using them as integrating and “secondary sources”.<sup>50</sup>

For Tennemann, philosophy, by its very nature, is always a system, an organic totality, a set of elements merged into a unity and logically consistent, and the first thing that the historian must do, for each philosopher of the past, is to apply himself to reconstructing the “system”. Tennemann’s concept of system contains several elements directly deriving from Kant, as is clear from the range of questions he suggests in order to find the data needed by the historian in the sources. But this is nothing new: in the form of a methodological rule, it is found in all the historiography of philosophy produced by the German Enlightenment, in Buddeus and Brucker, in the anti-Kantians like Tiedemann, and obviously in Kant and the Kantians themselves.<sup>51</sup> Identifying the system of an author within his works can be an easy task when the author himself intended to give a systematic form to his thoughts: “it is enough to focus on the principles and the connection of the whole”. But one should not limit oneself to the external appearance of the system: the historian should ask himself “whether the principle [of the system] has been formulated in a precise and clear form” and whether other ideas or presuppositions have been operating surreptitiously within the system. But the historian has to reconstruct the system of an author even when confronted with non-systematic writings. In this case the task is more difficult: we first “need to transfer ourselves into the viewpoint adopted by the author” and understand what his intention was; “then we need to search for the fundamental principle [of the system] and see what consequences are drawn from it, and what arguments are elaborated to prove it, until we are able to grasp the entire series of enunciations in their precise order” (I, pp. LVII–LVIII).

But finding the data which enable us to reconstruct the system of an author in the texts is not enough. In order to gain a “more clear and complete vision” of a system – “which did not always take form exactly in the same order in which it is

<sup>50</sup>*Gesch.*, I, pp. LVI–LVII; as regards the preference that Tiedemann himself had already expressed for reading the works of philosophers rather than indirect testimonies, see above, pp. 678–679. Buhle also lays special emphasis on a first-hand reading of the texts written by philosophers (see above, p. 827).

<sup>51</sup>Cf. *Models*, II, pp. 540–541 (Brucker); see above, pp. 674–675 (Tiedemann) and p. 799 (Buhle).

presented” – the researcher has to seek even those elements which can explain its “genesis and formation” in the sources: in this regard, what is most important is “the study of the peculiarity of the spirit, the description of the state of the science in that period, the most significant demands and needs. Then he must study their results in that thinker and the vision he has developed in response to all this”. The origin of a system is therefore to be sought in the spiritual personality of the thinker, which appears to condense in itself not only the subjective psychological aspects and the external circumstances diversely conditioning the person of the philosopher, but also the ahistorical foundation of his thought, which – in a Kantian perspective – is to be identified in the nature of rationality itself, of which the system of that thinker is a manifestation in history. Hence Tennemann derives the following rule: “the external factors together with the knowledge of the spiritual personality of a thinker may lead us to trace the original seeds of his system, the starting point from which to follow the development of the whole system” (I, pp. LVIII–LIX).

In collecting the materials, the historian must apply the rules of sound historical criticism: his work has to be as complete as possible, he must ascertain the authenticity of the texts and the reliability of sources, evaluate the degree of probability of the testimonies, and so on (§§ 38–39). All this still concerns what Tennemann had called the “historical truth” of the facts; and in this regard he adds nothing new, nothing which had not already been stated and systematized by the historiographical tradition of the Enlightenment, from Brucker to Tiedemann. Yet, besides the historical truth, what matters for Tennemann, as we already know, is also the “logical or philosophical truth” of the facts: it is not enough just to admit real, historically established facts: the facts “have to be grasped and presented in their original meaning”. And here Tennemann’s methodological observations become more innovative. The “historical truth” can never be separated from the “logical truth” of the facts. In the case of the history of philosophy, just like in any other science, the facts are thoughts, theories, concepts, which have been thought by someone in the past and which the historian has to grasp and present precisely in the same way as they were thought: “if an enunciation is not laid down in its true sense, it is no longer the same fact but another”. Hence the general rule: “investigating each single enunciation of a philosopher according to its true sense and spirit”. Certainly, in order to attain this end, we need “historical and philological knowledge”, possession of a “sound interpretative technique”, and the study of language. But all this is not enough to understand philosophemes in their “true sense” and “true spirit”: these are necessary but still insufficient conditions. What we need is philosophical criticism: the historian has to check the internal coherence of the system, trying to explain each single enunciation by means of the others, and finally bring everything back to the “source of all philosophemes, the spirit of man” (I, pp. LXII–LXIII). The historical characterization of philosophemes, and of the systems of philosophemes, therefore, appears to be insufficient: what is required is a deeper understanding, which is made possible by the ability to bring systems back to their origin, in the nature of speculative reason. In order for the datum to be grasped in its deeper “sense” and “spirit”, it must be introduced into a historical

plot, the Kantian “history of reason”, whose ultimate foundation rests in the nature of reason.<sup>52</sup>

### B. *Organizing the historical material: the “general” history of philosophy*

What precedes concerns the first phase of the historian’s work, collecting the materials; but, as previously said, the work of the historian then implies a moment in which the materials collected are organized and presented. Here too, the principle by which the historian must be guided derives from the fundamental property of the history of philosophy, which is neither a history of philosophers nor a history of philosophemes, but the history of the formation and development of philosophy as a science (*Gesch.*, I, pp. LXIII–LXIV; see *Revision*, col. 36). The first rule Tennemann derives from this principle concerns the use of materials: not all that which has been collected is to be included in the history of philosophy, but only “that which is of relevance and exerts an influence on the formation of this science, whereas all that which disrupts the concatenation and prevents a unitary outlook on the history must be left out”. Introducing detailed biographies of philosophers “would violate the unity of the history, thus diverting our attention from that which is its proper object towards the thinkers themselves and their individual histories”. Excessive devotion to the completeness of the exposition is also more detrimental than advantageous, because it prevents us from grasping what is of greater interest, “which arises from the unity of the exposition and from a global view of the connection” (*Gesch.*, I, pp. LXIV–LXVI).

Once again we encounter here Tennemann’s fundamental thesis, which he constantly reiterates in all his theoretical writings: the fundamental attribute of a scientific history of philosophy is unity, and this can only be given by reference to the aim, that is, by showing the relation linking each moment of the history to its endpoint, philosophy as a science: “the more the idea [of philosophy as a science] is expressed and taken into account and the more it stands out evidently in every detail, the more history increases its unity and connection” (I, pp. LXVI–LXVII). Hence the second rule: “this aim is reached if the writer of history (*Geschichtsschreiber*) – always and with respect to each thinker occupying a place in history – presents the concept of philosophy that reason managed to reach at that moment according to the existing degree of culture, and if he describes, in a complete and clear form, all that which was done to found and realise this concept, and if he presents all this in relation to the idea of philosophy, which is one alone. Only in this way is it possible to describe the progress, or the standstill, reached on the path leading to science (*auf dem Wege zur Wissenschaft*), and this is naturally followed by an account of the causes which determined or helped either the progress or the standstill” (I, p. LXVII). The subdivision of history into periods should also be done by adopting the criterion, internal to the history of philosophy, of reference to the ultimate aim of

<sup>52</sup>Cf. Kant, *KrV*, A 852–856/B 880–884: the history of philosophy that closes the first *Critique* is formulated “from a merely transcendental viewpoint, i.e. from the viewpoint of the nature of pure reason”; this position is typical of the Kantians (as concerns Buhle, see above, pp. 797–799).

the history, and the “subdivisions usually employed hitherto must be downgraded to the rank of secondary partitions and subordinated to a higher standpoint” (I, pp. LXIX–LXX).

Only “in this way does the history of philosophy become *general* (*allgemein*)”, which does not mean including everything and everybody (I, p. LXX). Being general here does not mean completeness: the latter can indeed become an obstacle hampering the achievement of the former. Besides the *general* history of philosophy there are *special* histories of philosophy, whose importance and use are not denied by Tennemann, both because they can be used as materials for a general history of philosophy, and because, all together, they contribute to that completeness which is not one of the aims of a *general* history of philosophy. Tennemann lists them: histories of the philosophy of a people, of a historical age, a school, a system, a particular philosophical science, or histories of philosophical methods, or the language of philosophy, obviously in addition to biographies of philosophers. On one hand, these special dissertations precede the general history and provide it with materials useful for presenting the formation of philosophy as a science; but, on the other hand, the general history provides these special dissertations with the universal standpoint from which they must let themselves be guided. The history of philosophy is therefore *general* not only because, as is evident, it embraces the whole historical development of philosophical disciplines in their entirety, but also and above all because it is carried out *according to a standpoint which is general*, comprehensive, more elevated and ultimate, determined by the aim to which history tends and which has become known since the turning point brought about by critical philosophy. As an account of the historical production of philosophy as a science, it manifestly contains an element of judgement. This element – as we have seen above – is represented by the Kantian concept of philosophy, the “idea” of philosophy as a science, critical philosophy as a “propaedeutic” to the scientific system, as a plan of the edifice of knowledge, and as a methodical principle for constructing philosophical science.

Tennemann resumes this theme in the third part of the ‘Einleitung’, which is devoted to the “literature concerning the history of philosophy” and contains short observations on the history of historiography as well. Other similar judgements appear in writings with an analogous content, like the *Uebersicht* of 1795 and later the *Revision* of 1801. Tennemann’s position is the following: a *scientific* history of philosophy is only possible after Kant. There is no doubt that the progress made in the field of philology in Germany thanks to Heyne and his school was decisive for the development of the historiography of philosophy after Brucker, and Meiners, and Tiedemann’s historiographical production cannot be explained without them; but they alone would not have been enough to bring about the radical change which occurred at the end of the century in the studies on the history of philosophy, a change concerning not only the contents, but also the form of the *general* history of philosophy. For Tennemann, this turning point can only be explained by the advent of critical philosophy, which led to “a deeper analysis of the concept and nature of philosophy and an explanation of the cognitive faculty as well as of the forms and laws of the understanding and reason, thanks to an appropriate



division of the domain of philosophy into a theoretical part and a practical part and, more in general, a systematic subdivision of the domain and the different parts of philosophy". Hence critical philosophy "provides the historian with more precise standpoints and more reliable tools for understanding valid for all philosophemes, and enables him to give the history of philosophy a worthier structure (*Gestalt*) also with respect to form (*Form*)" (I, p. LXXVII).

## 11.2.4 *Geschichte der Philosophie* *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*

### 11.2.4.1 The Structure of the Works

The *Geschichte der Philosophie* (Leipzig: bey Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1798–1819, 11 volumes in 12 tomes, left incomplete) is subdivided into seven parts (*Hauptstücke*), each of which is devoted to an age (*Epoche*) in the history of philosophy. The first volume (1798, pp. LXXXVIII, 428) contains – in addition to the 'Vorrede' and the index-summary, which in this volume, like all those that follow, precedes the exposition – an extended 'Einleitung' (pp. III–LXXXVIII) on the theory, method, and literature relevant to the history of philosophy. This is followed by the first part of the work, which spans the period of the origins, with the Ionian philosophers, up to the Sophists. It is subdivided into 11 sections (*Abschnitte*), the first of which has an introductory character and the last of which serves as a conclusion summarizing (*Uebersicht*) the whole period, and each section is devoted to a philosopher or a school. The volume ends with two supplements (*Anhänge*), the first of which consists of a chronological table and the second a bibliography relevant to the period.

The second volume (1799, pp. XXII, 560) begins the treatment of the second part, spanning the period between Socrates and Zeno the Stoic. The volume comprises a short introduction to the period (pp. 3–22) and sections 1–6, of various length, which are devoted to Socrates (pp. 25–87), the Cynics (pp. 87–99), the Cyrenaics (pp. 99–133), the Megarians (pp. 133–166), Pyrrho and Timon (pp. 166–188), and Plato (pp. 188–528); the volume ends with a chronological table and a bibliography.

The third volume (1801, pp. VII, 440) continues the treatment of the second period with sections 7–10, devoted to the thinkers who immediately succeeded Plato in the Academy (pp. 3–17), Aristotle (pp. 17–331), Aristotle's pupils and successors (pp. 331–346), and Epicurus (pp. 347–432); at the end is a bibliography (but no chronological table).

The fourth volume (1803, pp. VI, 454) completes the treatment of the second period, with the sections 11 and 12, devoted respectively to Zeno of Citium (pp. 3–148) and to an overall view of the period (pp. 149–180). The treatment of the third period follows, from Arcesilaus to Antiochus of Ascalon. After a brief introduction to this part (pp. 183–188), the subject matter is subdivided into six sections, devoted to Arcesilaus (pp. 188–206), Ariston of Chios and Erillus (pp. 206–228), Cleanthes

and Chrysippus (pp. 228–329), Carneades (pp. 330–366), Antipater of Tarsus, Panaetius and Posidonius of Apamea, the Stoics (pp. 366–389), and Philo of Larissa and Antiochus of Ascalon, and the Academics (pp. 390–433); the latter section also comprises (pp. 434–440) a global appraisal of the third period. As usual, the volume ends with a chronological table and a bibliography.

The fifth volume (1805, pp. XII, 402), the only one containing a dedication (to William I, Elector of Hesse-Cassel) deals with the fourth epoch, namely, the philosophy of the Roman age, which is marked by an eclectic, syncretistic, and mystical spirit. The general introduction to the period (pp. 3–44), is followed by three sections devoted to Aenesidemus (pp. 44–103), philosophy in Rome (pp. 103–267), and Sextus Empiricus (pp. 267–396), respectively. The section concerning the philosophy of Rome consists of two chapters, the first devoted to Cicero, the second to the Greek schools in Rome. In this case too, the volume ends with a chronological table and a bibliography.

The sixth volume (1807, pp. VIII, 494) presents the philosophy of the fourth period. It contains only one section, the fourth, subdivided into four chapters. It is opened by a short introduction (pp. 3–19), followed by the first chapter, devoted to Plotinus (pp. 19–187); the second chapter is concerned with the Neoplatonists, from Porphyry to Damascius (pp. 187–376); the third chapter contains an overall view of the period (pp. 376–438), plus an appendix concerning the non-authentic writings produced during that age (pp. 438–480); and the fourth is very short and contains a conclusive judgement on the period (pp. 480–492). At the end of the volume we find the chronological table, in this case a simple list in which the philosophers of the time are named, but without establishing the usual parallel between political history and the history of philosophy, plus the bibliography.

The seventh volume (1809, pp. VIII, 340) begins an account of the history of philosophy in the fifth period, namely, the “philosophy at the service of theology or the Church”. In this volume, the introduction to the whole period (pp. 3–20) is followed by two sections, the first concerning the origins of Christianity and its relationship with philosophy (pp. 21–78), the second on Patristic philosophy and the Christian philosophy in the West and the East, up to Bede and John of Damascus (pp. 87–337) respectively. At the end is the chronological list enumerating the philosophers, and the bibliography.

The eighth volume (tome 1, 1810, pp. XXXVI, 1–448; tome 2, 1811, pp. 449–992) concludes the treatment of the fifth period. It contains only one section, that is, the third section of the fifth part, and is entirely devoted to Scholastic philosophy. The introduction (pp. 3–42) is followed by the narrative part, which is subdivided into four periods, the first spanning the time from Scotus Eriugena to Anselm of Aosta (pp. 42–153), the second from Roscelin to John of Salisbury (pp. 154–350), the third, the most extensive, on Arabic philosophy and Scholasticism from Albert the Great to Raymond Lull (pp. 351–839), and the fourth from William of Ockham to Raymond of Sabunde (pp. 840–986). The philosophers are presented one after another in a chronological order. The volume ends with the chronological table, which draws a parallel between the sequence of the emperors and the events punctuating the course of Scholastic philosophy. Finally comes the bibliography.

The ninth volume (1814, pp. XII, 530) is devoted to the sixth period. The short introduction (pp. 3–11) is followed by three sections, the first of which is devoted to the causes which brought about the dissolution of Scholasticism (pp. 12–48), the second to the revival of the ancient schools (pp. 49–268), and the third to the earlier modern attempts to reform philosophy (pp. 269–528). At the end is the chronological table, which again makes a parallel between the events of philosophy and the facts which occurred in political, social, and religious history. There is no bibliographical section.

The tenth volume (1817, pp. II, 537; there is no ‘Vorrede’; a portrait of Tennemann is reproduced here) begins the treatment of the philosophy produced in the seventh period, from Bacon to Kant, excluding the treatment of the latter. The first part is concerned with theoretical philosophy, and a second part devoted to practical philosophy was planned. After a very concise introduction (pp. 1–6), the volume is divided into two sections, the first devoted to the “early schools of empiricism” deals with the following authors (in this order): Bacon, Hobbes, Herbert of Cherbury, Gassendi, Claude Bérigard, and Böhme (pp. 7–197); the second devoted to Descartes’ philosophy, to the philosophy produced by his immediate followers and opponents, and to Malebranche, Spinoza, the English Platonists, and seventeenth-century scepticism (pp. 198–537). The chronological table and the bibliography are missing.

The eleventh volume (1819, pp. VI, 519) carries on the treatment of the philosophy produced in the seventh period, part one. The volume contains sections 3–5, devoted – respectively – to Locke (pp. 1–75), Leibniz and the German philosophy of his time, Huet’s and Bayle’s scepticism (pp. 76–279), and eighteenth-century empiricism in France and in England (pp. 280–519). There is no chronological table or bibliography in this volume either. The work was not brought to completion due to the author’s death. The next volume should have dealt with theoretical philosophy in Germany in the eighteenth century up to Kant; another volume should have contained a treatment of the second part (*Abtheilung*) of the seventh period, that is to say, moral philosophy in the period from Descartes to Kant; in the end, a comprehensive index of the entire work was planned (see XI, p. IV).

In 1829 there appeared, edited by Amadeus Wendt (1783–1836), a second edition of the first volume: *Geschichte der Philosophie*, von W.G. Tennemann [...], mit berichtigenden, beurtheilenden und ergänzenden Anmerkungen und Zusätzen herausgegeben von Amadeus Wendt [...], vol. 1: *Die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophie bis auf Sokrates, nebst einer allgemeinen Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie enthaltend* (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1829), pp. xvii (‘Vorrede’), i–LXXX (‘Einleitung’), 558. The notes (*Anmerkungen*) written by Wendt and his addenda (*Zusätze*) to the notes written by Tennemann are copious and are marked by a symbol; the changes made to the text are very few and unimportant. Only the first volume of this new edition was published (on this edition, cf. Ritter, ALZ, nos 11–14 (1830), cols 81–109, and Zeller, pp. 63–64).

The *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Für akademischen Unterricht* (Leipzig: bey Ambrosius Barth, 1812), pp. IV, 360, amounting in all to 382 paragraphs, consists of three parts, corresponding to the three “periods” into which

Tennemann, in this work, subdivides the history of philosophy. The historical narrative is preceded by a short 'Vorrede' and an 'Einleitung' (§§ 1–70, pp. 1–35), which is divided into two sections, the first of which presents again, in the form of a summary, the introductory essay to Tennemann's greater work, whereas the second provides the explanation of a few fundamental historico-philosophical concepts.

The account of "Greek philosophy" (§§ 71–221, pp. 36–162), preceded by a short introduction (§§ 71–75, pp. 36–39), is divided into three sections. The first section (§§ 79–104, pp. 39–63) deals with the period from Thales to the Sophists, and the subject matter is structured under six headings (Ionians §§ 79–83, Pythagoreans §§ 84–92, Eleatics §§ 93–98, Atomists §§ 99–100, Anaxagoras §§ 101–102, and the Sophists, §§ 103–104). The second section (§§ 105–159, pp. 63–114) deals with the period from Socrates to Antiochus of Ascalon and, after an introduction (§§ 105–107), is in turn subdivided into three chapters (*Abtheilungen*), the first devoted to Socrates (§§ 108–113, pp. 64–70), the second to the "partial systems" deriving from Socrates ('Einseitige Systeme der Sokratiker'), i.e. the minor Socratic schools (§§ 114–121, pp. 70–76), the third to the "more complete systems" deriving from Socrates ('Vollendetere Systeme, welche aus Sokrates Schule hervorgingen'), i.e. those of Plato (§§ 123–129, pp. 77–85), Aristotle (§§ 130–139, pp. 85–95), Epicurus (§§ 140–146, pp. 95–101), Zeno and the other Stoics (§§ 147–154, pp. 102–110), and the new Academy of Arcesilaus and Carneades (§§ 155–159, pp. 110–114). The third section deals with the period from Aenesidemus to the closure of the school of Athens and, after an introduction (§§ 160–167, pp. 114–118), is in turn subdivided into five chapters, the first devoted to the diffusion of Greek philosophy in Rome (§§ 168–174, pp. 119–127), the second to the "scepticism of the empiricist school", namely Aenesidemus and Sextus Empiricus (§§ 175–182, pp. 127–131), the third to Hebrew and Gnostic philosophy (§§ 183–188, pp. 131–136), the fourth to the "enthusiastic (*schwärmerische*) philosophy of the Alexandrian Neoplatonists" (§§ 189–212, pp. 137–152), in particular Plotinus and Proclus, the fifth to "philosophy under the Church Fathers" (§§ 213–221, pp. 152–162).

The second part is devoted to "medieval or Scholastic philosophy" (§§ 222–256, pp. 163–196) and, after a general introduction (§§ 222–230, pp. 163–168), is divided into four sections, corresponding to the four phases in the development of Scholasticism: the first deals with the period of "blind realism" (*blinder Realismus*), from Scotus Eriugena to Anselm (§§ 231–234, pp. 168–171); the second deals with the opposition between realism and nominalism ('Entzweyung des Realismus und Nominalismus'), from Roscelin to Albert the Great, excluding the treatment of the latter (§§ 235–239, pp. 171–175); the third deals with the period marked by the "absolute dominance of realism and the perfect alliance of the ecclesiastical system and Aristotelian philosophy" ('Ausschliessliche Herrschaft des Realismus. Völlige Coalition des kirchlichen Systems und der aristotelischen Philosophie'), that is to say the Arabs, as well as Scholasticism from Albert the Great to Bonaventure, Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and Roger Bacon (§§ 240–252, pp. 176–190); and the last section deals with the "struggle between nominalists and realists, as revived by Ockham, resulting in the supremacy of the former" ('Durch Ockham erneuerter

Kampf der Nominalisten mit den Realisten mit siegreichem Uebergewichte der ersten'), i.e. Scholasticism from Ockham to Raymond of Sabunde (§§ 253–256, pp. 191–196).

The third part is devoted to “modern philosophy” (§§ 257–382, pp. 201–360). After a general introduction to the period (§§ 257–266, pp. 201–206), it is divided into three sections, corresponding to the three phases (*Zeiträume*) into which the historical development of philosophy in this period is structured. The subject matter of the first section is the revival of ancient philosophy ('Reproduction und Combination alter Systeme') which took place from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries (§§, 266–300, pp. 206–242). The second section deals with the “new autonomous attempts made both by dogmatic and sceptic philosophy” ('Neue selbstständige Versuche des dogmatischen und skeptischen Philosophirens mit tiefer eindringendem und umfassendem systematischen Geiste nach Principien'), that is to say modern philosophy from Bacon and Descartes to Kant (§§ 301–358, pp. 243–320). This section is preceded by an introduction (§§ 301–308, pp. 243–246) and consists of two chapters, the first of which deals with theoretical philosophy (§§ 309–343, pp. 246–304) and the second with practical philosophy (§§ 344–358, pp. 304–320). The third section deals with the “critical spirit in philosophy”, namely, Kantian critical philosophy and its developments (§§ 359–365, pp. 321–360), in the following order: Reinhold, Beck, Fichte, Schelling, Bouterwek, Bardili, Jacobi, and Schulze.

The description of each author is preceded (or, in some cases, followed) by the relevant bibliography, in smaller print. It has no notes; the bibliographical references are provided in the text. Each of the three parts of the handbook is followed by a chronological table. It has no indexes. In 1816 Tennemann prepared a second edition of the handbook: *Grundriss [...] zweyte verbesserte Auflage* (Leipzig: bey J.A. Barth, 1816), pp. XII, 404. In this edition, the introduction is extended with a third section devoted to Oriental philosophy; the bibliography is updated; the three chronological tables, which in the first section were placed at the end of the single parts composing the work, are now merged together and placed at the centre of the work (pp. 178–194).

In 1820 Wendt prepared the third edition of the handbook: *Grundriss [...] dritte, vermehrte und verbesserte, Auflage, herausgegeben von Amadeus Wendt [...]* (Leipzig: bey Barth, 1820), pp. XVI, 488. The addenda and corrections concern notably the developments of German idealist philosophy after Schelling (in particular Herbart, Hegel, Johann Jakob Wagner) and are drawn from notes written by Tennemann himself; the bibliography is updated; and the chronological table is placed at the end of the volume. In 1825 Wendt prepared the fourth edition (Leipzig: bey Barth, 1825, pp. XVI, 562): the bibliography is updated, some changes and addenda have been introduced and, as concerns modern philosophy, the partition into theoretical and practical philosophy disappears, so that they are now examined as a unity. The frontispiece bears the date 1825, whereas Wendt's 'Vorrede' is dated December 1823; in reality, the work was published at the end of summer 1824, as attested by the review appeared in the *Leipziger Literatur-Zeitung*, issue of 3rd September 1824, in which the year of publication is indicated, however, as 1825.

In his 'Préface' to the translation of 1829, Cousin refers to a non-existent fourth edition of 1823, and considers the edition he is translating (i.e. that of 1825) as the fifth edition. In the reprint of the 'Préface' which appeared in the *Fragments philosophiques* (Paris, 1838<sup>3</sup>), Cousin corrects the mistakes, which, however, had been already taken up by those who had referred to his edition of 1829. In 1829 the fifth edition was published by Amadeus Wendt (Leipzig: Verlag von Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1829, pp. XVI, 607): it was unchanged with respect to the fourth, except for an updated bibliography.

The *Grundriss* was translated more than once. The first translation – into Greek, edited by K.M. Koumas on the basis of the 1816 edition – was published in Vienna in 1818 (pp. x, 436; on pp. 289–296, with a brief account of eighteenth-century Greek philosophy added). In 1829 the *Grundriss* was translated into French by Cousin: *Manuel de l'histoire de la philosophie, traduit [...] par V. Cousin* (Paris: Pichon et Didier, 1829), 2 vols, pp. XXVII ['Préface' by Cousin], 392 and 426 (concurrent editions and reprints: Paris: Sautet, 1829; Louvain: F. Michel, Imprimeur Libraire de l'Université, 1830; Bruxelles: Haumann, Cattoir & C., 1837). The translation was carried out on the basis of the German edition of 1825; however – except for the bio-bibliographical notes – Cousin excludes the account of German philosophy after Schelling: "it is too short", he writes, "to be intelligible outside Germany and, furthermore, it is exposed to mistakes and changes, since the doctrines worked out by these philosophers are incessantly modified and developed". A second edition "augmentée sur la cinquième et dernière édition allemande" [that of 1829] was published in Paris by Cousin in 1839 (Librairie De Ladrangé, vol. 1, pp. XXIII, 391; vol. 2, pp. 432).

The first Italian translation was taken from Cousin's 1829 edition and appeared 3 years after it: *Manuale della storia della filosofia [...], tradotto da Francesco Longhena, con note e supplimenti [supplements] dei professori Giandomenico Romagnosi e Baldassare Poli* (Milan: A. Fontana, 1832–1836), 3 volumes in 4 tomes; the first two volumes, pp. XXV, 383 and 395, published in 1832, contain the translation of Tennemann's manual, whereas the third volume, published in 1836 in two tomes and totalling pp. L, 947, contains Poli's 'Supplimenti' (concurrent edition: Naples: Prota, 1833). A second edition of this translation was published in 1855 (Milan: Giovanni Silvestri, 1855, pp. XXIV–364, 368, and 895). At the same time as Poli's translation, a second Italian translation was published, edited by abbot Modena; this text, which had been ready for a time, was directly drawn from the German Leipzig edition of 1820 and bears the title: *Compendio della storia della filosofia di Guglielmo Tennemann, tradotto dall'originale tedesco dall'abate Gaetano Modena* (Pavia: Bizzoni, 1832–1835); in this case too, the first two volumes, published in 1832 and 1833, respectively, contain the translation of the handbook (pp. 339 and 346), whereas the third volume, published in 1835 (pp. 356), contains the 'Supplimenti al compendio [...] compilati dall'abate G. Modena'.

Again in 1832, the first English translation was published in Oxford: *A Manual of the History of Philosophy, translated [...] by the Rev. Arthur Johnson* (Oxford: D.A. Talboys, 1832), pp. XI, 502 (repr. Oxford, 1833). The translation was based on the German edition of 1829 but also took into account Cousin's translation and,

like the latter, shortened the exposition of German philosophy after Schelling by providing only the bio-bibliographical notes; the translator also left out “a few passages which appeared [in his view] to militate against Revealed Religion” (p. IX); a second edition, revising and abundantly enlarging the preceding one, was published in 1852: *A Manual of the History of Philosophy, translated [...] by the Rev. A. Johnson, revised, enlarged, and continued by J[ohn] R[eynell] Morell* (London: H.G. Bohn, 1852), pp. XII–532. This edition revises and completes Johnson’s translation by introducing all those sections of the 1829 German edition which had been excluded from it; moreover, it contains some added paragraphs, drawn from different sources, concerning the developments of philosophy in Germany (Schopenhauer, Strauss, Feuerbach), England (Whewell, Hamilton, Coleridge), France (Cousin, Comte, Fourier, Proudhon), Italy (Mamiani, Gioberti, Rosmini), the Netherlands, and America (Emerson, Parker); the text is preceded by a “vocabulary of Kantian and metaphysical terms” (pp. 7–8). This edition was repeatedly reprinted (London: Bell & Daldy, 1867, 1870, 1873, 1878).

#### 11.2.4.2 The Periodization

In the *Geschichte der Philosophie*, the periodization is given a prominent role, not only for the obvious needs of the narrative, particularly important in such a lengthy work, but above all for reasons of a philosophical character, since it is the task of periodization to place the right emphasis on the gradual formation of philosophy as a science. Tennemann certainly acknowledged both the practical use of partitioning the subject matter and the importance of reporting the facts according to a chronological sequence; but, for him, this had to be subordinated to a higher principle of a philosophical character, which, to his mind, had not previously been taken into due consideration.

“In any history of a considerable length”, observes Tennemann in the essay of 1801, “the *division into periods* is indispensable”; in a historical account, nothing is more useful than a “wise” subdivision of the subject matter into sections, “on which the mind may dwell, compare the past with what follows and evaluate to what extent we have drawn closer to or farther from our aim”. As regards the history of philosophy, which “encompasses in a very wide span of time such an abundance of different events”, the need to subdivide the subject matter into sections has never been seriously denied. “Nevertheless, there is almost no other respect in which this history is so distant from a correct theory, let alone from the ideal”: hitherto, the subject matter has been subdivided into sections by reference almost exclusively to the “series of peoples” or the “succession of philosophical schools or individual philosophers”, or by adopting both an ethnographical criterion and a criterion based on the succession of the schools, sometimes even taking into account “mere chronological information”. But even if we admit that this method might have some practical advantage, it certainly does not possess any scientific dignity: “if the history of philosophy had no other purpose than to list the individual philosophers, present their lives and activities, and describe the degree of culture attained by a

people, even with respect to the most elevated aims of reason, there would not be much to say against this method of proceeding; but since the history of philosophy must pursue, as its principal aim, the development of philosophy toward science, and must relate everything to this aim, it follows that, in order to characterize an age, we have to take into account only those thinkers and facts thanks to which that science somehow approached this aim, or departed from it, above all if they influenced the philosophical activity of the following age" (*Revision*, cols 537–538; see *Gesch.*, I, pp. LXIX–LXX).

The method of dividing the history of philosophy in relation to temporal history, which had variously been adopted by the historiography of philosophy up to Brucker, and then again by Meiners and Tiedemann, is rejected by Tennemann, who favours a method totally internal to the development of philosophy, using chronology and subdivision into the periods of universal history only when indispensable, and in any case always in a subordinate position. In the *Geschichte*, no outstanding position is assigned to the subdivision – by then customary – of the history of philosophy into ancient, medieval, and modern, whereas this subdivision is present in the more scholastic *Grundriss*. In the *Geschichte*, the history of philosophy is subdivided into eight periods. Tennemann (like Tiedemann, but unlike Buhle) entirely excludes pre-Greek speculation. The ethnical criterion, still fundamental for Buhle, is employed here to a minimum extent: the author obviously refers to Greek philosophy, then to Hebrew and Arab philosophy, but these partitions, as we shall see later, are subordinated to other more general divisions based on speculative characteristics. As regards eighteenth-century philosophy, Tennemann adopts a subdivision by geographical and cultural areas, which is nevertheless subordinated to a distinction of a speculative nature: French philosophy and English philosophy are seen as corresponding with the tradition of empiricism, whereas German philosophy is seen as corresponding with the tradition of rationalism.

The first period comprises Greek philosophy from Thales to the Sophists; this is the age of "unilateral and non-systematic speculation" (*Grundriss*, p. 39). In this early period, interest is only centred upon speculation, not upon practical philosophy; reason begins "with speculations about the world, the soul, and God, and ends with a universal doubt concerning knowledge". The spirit of research starts "to investigate objects without knowing itself"; the absence of critical reflection on the nature of the faculties, "which was not possible yet", exerted a negative influence on that particular type of research: "a reliable means of orientation was lacking". It was only the disparity between the results obtained by enquiring about the world, the soul, and God, the materialism formulated by the Ionian philosophers, the rationalism elaborated by the Eleatics, the monism put forward by some, and the pluralism put forward by others that succeeded in convincing thinkers "to seek the source of their mistakes in themselves rather than in the objects [...]". But before reaching this point, it was necessary for reason to lose all faith in its own speculations. This took place at the end of this period" with the sceptical crisis of the Sophists (*Gesch.*, I, pp. 403–404). Within the limits of this period, Tennemann abandoned as totally worthless the framework partitioning the schools into Ionian and Italic (I, pp. 49–50); the philosophers are classified rather according



to theoretical criteria, for example according to whether they sought a solution to the cosmological problem (through experience and reflection) in matter (the Ionians) or in form (the Pythagoreans) of empirical intuition, or through the opposition between experience and reason (the Eleatics), or again by unifying experience and reason (the Atomists); and so on.

The second period, dealing with Greek philosophy from Socrates to Zeno the Stoic, was an age which saw the primacy of “the systematic spirit in philosophy”. This is the “golden age of philosophy” (IV, p. 149), in which the great systems of Antiquity arose, namely, the Platonic, the Aristotelian, the Epicurean, and the Stoic. Socrates is almost exclusively a moral philosopher. The minor Socratic schools develop individual aspects of Socratic teaching, whereas the major schools develop in a rigorously systematic form – starting from different and opposite principles – both the speculative side and the practical side of philosophy. In this case too, the way the period is partitioned obeys criteria of a theoretical nature clearly inspired by Kant, such as the distinction between speculative and practical philosophy and, transferred back to the ancient world, the opposition between rationalism and empiricism.

The third period covers the development of Greek, Stoic, and Academic philosophy, from Arcesilaus to Antiochus of Ascalon, and is marked by “dogmatism struggling against scepticism” (IV, p. 183). The philosophers are presented in a chronological order, but the thread leading through the entire account is the opposition between the dogmatism of the Stoics and the scepticism of the Academics.

The fourth period comprises the development of pagan philosophy from Aenesidemus to the closure of the school of Athens, and is characterized by the dominance of the “eclectic, syncretistic, and mystical spirit in philosophy” (V, p. 3). Within this period, the narrative approximately follows a chronological order: Aenesidemus’ scepticism, Cicero’s eclecticism, the final phase of scepticism with Sextus Empiricus, and Alexandrian Neoplatonism. The philosophy of the Church Fathers as well as Hebrew philosophy are excluded from this period and are assigned to the following age. This period concludes the historical cycle of Greek philosophy, during which, observes Tennemann, “philosophy was shaped in all possible forms [. . .]. In philosophizing, the Greek spirit attempted all routes and methods, with the only exception of the critical method” (VI, p. 483).

The fifth period deals with Christian philosophy, both Patristics and Scholasticism. The main feature of this period is “philosophy at the service of the Church” (VII, p. 3): in the Patristic age, philosophy served to define the contents of the Christian faith; in the medieval age, with Scholasticism, it served to create systems which variously intertwine theology and philosophy. Yet the prevailing characteristic of the period is the subjugation of philosophy to a power extraneous to reason, such as that of the Church; but even in this case, speculation (in particular inside Scholasticism, which consists of different phases) follows the usual stages, albeit on a smaller scale, namely empiricism and rationalism, mysticism and scepticism.

The study of the classics and the religious reform were to provoke the crisis of Scholasticism. The sixth period, which arose from the dissolution of Scholasticism, embraces the philosophy produced in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which saw the revival of the ancient schools and the early attempts to philosophize autonomously. Here the criterion adopted for partitioning the subject matter relates to the schools, and within these large subdivisions the order followed is chronological: the treatment examines the Aristotelians, the Platonists, the Stoics, and finally those philosophers who made use of sectarian doctrines by weaving them together in a variety of ways.

The seventh period embraces the cycle of modern philosophy from Bacon to Kant, corresponding to the analogous central cycle in ancient thought, namely that of the great post-Socratic systems. As previously said, Tennemann first presents speculative philosophy and then practical philosophy. The criterion adopted within this period for subdividing the material is a theoretical one: on one hand, we find dogmatism in its two versions, empiricism and rationalism; on the other hand, we find scepticism. But it is also the case that different criteria are simultaneously adopted, for example that of chronological order, arranged in centuries, and, at the same time, as regards the eighteenth century, the grouping into geographical and cultural areas.

The eighth period is devoted to Kantian philosophy and its developments in Germany. As to the criteria adopted for the periodization of this final part, we can only give limited information derived from the *Grundriss*, since the *Geschichte* is incomplete. As regards philosophy after Kant too, Tennemann tends to use the traditional framework, within certain limits, thus distinguishing between sceptics and dogmatics, idealists and realists.

### 11.2.4.3 The Historiographical Theories

#### 11.2.4.3.1 Greek Philosophy

For Tennemann, philosophy arose in Greece in the age of Thales. This position had already been maintained by Meiners, and then by Tiedemann, using arguments of a historical nature, and it appeared also in Kant, in particular in the *Vorlesungen* (see above, pp. 573–574, 658–659 and 726–730). Tennemann takes it up again, using arguments which are not particularly new. Other peoples also brought forth “learned scholars who, like Thales, tried to find a solution to the problem of the origin of the world and the essence of the universe”; yet, it was only among the Greeks that the human spirit, “moving from these preparatory attempts, developed the idea of a scientific philosophy and tried to fulfil it”. The reasons for this change are to be found in the economic, political, and social conditions of Greece: as in the typical theories of Enlightenment historiography, factors such as economic welfare, great political freedom, an intense spirit of emulation, and a lively antagonism between

individuals and groups, created the conditions for the development of the intellectual faculties and, more in general, of culture (*Gesch.*, I, pp. 3–13).<sup>53</sup>

The history of Greek philosophy, viewed in its global development, seems to describe a sort of cycle. Plato's philosophy is a form of dogmatic rationalism, whereas that of Aristotle gives rise to a form of dogmatic empiricism. The Stoics and the Epicureans, and before them the Cynics and the Cyrenaics, give systematic expression to two opposite forms of dogmatism in the ethical field, regarding in particular the conception of the highest good, thus favouring – according to the well-known Kantian scheme – virtue (the former) and happiness (the latter). Dogmatism in the speculative and ethical fields is contrasted, from the very beginning, by the scepticism held by Pyrrho, and then by that of the Academics. The opposition between dogmatism and scepticism continues, in new forms which are more complex and diversely intermingled, in the last phase of ancient thought, due to the syncretism and rationalistic mysticism of the Neoplatonists; these forms of renewed dogmatism are contrasted by the sceptic line of thought, from Aenesidemus to Sextus Empiricus. As we can see, Greek thought is classified according to ideal types and a framework which would reappear in the modern age, and which Tennemann derives from Kant's history of reason. The same cyclic trend (empiricist and rationalistic dogmatism, scepticism) comes up again, with more or less significant variations, within each of the periods into which the greater cycles – the ancient and the modern – are subdivided.

#### A. *The pre-Socratics*

Let us take, for example, the pre-Socratics, who go from Thales to the Sophists, including the latter. Of the two cognitive needs which, according to Kant's framework, are addressed respectively by the philosophy of nature and by ethics, the pre-Socratics were perceptive only to the former, concerning themselves exclusively, therefore, with speculation on the external world. In this period, philosophy is identified with the cosmological problem. It was only later, due to the different and opposite answers given by philosophers, which had brought about the scepticism of the Sophists, that the problem of the origin and validity of knowledge emerged; at the same time, ethics arose as a philosophical problem from the dissolution of traditional morals (see I, pp. 33–36, 38, and 403–404). But when these two problems, that of the nature of knowledge and that of ethics, presented themselves clearly, the second phase – that of the great dogmatic systems of classical Greek philosophy – had already begun.

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<sup>53</sup> Other similar arguments are present in Meiners; but in Tennemann they are theoretical rather than sociological and recall those found in Kant's *Vorlesungen* as well as in his works on the philosophy of history (see above, pp. 573–574 and 726–728). On the exclusion of African and Oriental peoples from the history of philosophy in the historiography of the late Enlightenment (from Meiners onwards), including that of Kantian inspiration, cf. P.K.J. Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy*, pp. 11–29, 69–95.

In reply to the question concerning the origin of the world, that is, of experience as a whole (*der Inbegriff der Erfahrungswelt*), the early philosophers turned to that which had been first attested by sensible perception (I, pp. 38–39), then by pure reason. The Ionians, but also Empedocles, the Atomists, Heraclitus, and Anaxagoras himself, believed they could find the principle of all things in the *matter* of sensible intuition: some looked for it in one element, some in more than one element, some in a sort of original mixture of all elements, and so on, ranging from more approximate to more refined solutions. By contrast, the Pythagoreans thought they could find the principle of the objects of experience in the *form* of sensible intuition: yet, since they were still unable to distinguish “between the product of pure understanding and the matter of its concepts, they placed numbers in objects, and made the former into the constitutive elements of the latter; in other words, they made that which is a mere condition of our representations of the external objects, as perceived in space and time, into the condition of the objects themselves” (I, pp. 103–104; cf. pp. 43–44).

The variety of hypotheses formulated on things generating themselves from prime matter induced the Eleatics to reflect upon “the concept of generation and its possibility”. They argued that there is contradiction between the concept of something permanent, which remains immutable throughout all change, and generation. Instead of adopting the standpoint of experience, like the “physicists” (both Ionians and Pythagoreans), the Eleatics adopted the standpoint of reason, and distinguished between the world of experience (*Erfahrungswelt*) and the intelligible world (*Verstandeswelt*), between substance as phenomenon (*Erscheinung*) and substance as noumenon (cf. I, pp. 44, 47–48, 150–151, 154, and 191). However, since there was no “critique of reason” to enable them to “recognize this amphiboly” (I, p. 168), “they used the idea of *absolute substance* constitutively, as if that idea produced something real”, and for this reason, since there was a contradiction between that idea and experience, they regarded experience as an illusion (*Täuschung*) (I, pp. 208–209). This, observes Tennemann, laid the foundations, for the first time in the history of thought, for the distinction between “the system of *empiricism* and that of *rationalism*” (I, p. 48).

Atomism was an attempt, against the position held by the Eleatics, to reconcile reason and experience, “an attempt”, observes Tennemann, “which, in this regard, was absolutely unsuccessful. [...] We concede with the Eleatics that without an empty space movement is not possible”; yet if “an empty space is not a positive reality (*das Reale*), it is still something existing (*etwas Wirkliches*)”: here Tennemann uses Kant’s distinction between *Realität*, which is a category of quality, and *Wirklichkeit*, which is a category of modality (I, pp. 258–262). Heraclitus and then Anaxagoras continued the cosmological speculation of the Ionians, although distinguishing – obscurely (the former), much more clearly (the latter) – original matter from power, or principle, which is the cause of movement. The cycle is closed by the indifferentism and scepticism of the Sophists, who “by their quibbles and artifices, which destroy all sense of truth and knowledge [...], led to an investigation of the cognitive power and the logical laws” (I, p. 410). In the same period, the crisis of traditional morals led to the ethical question being posed in philosophical terms.

### B. *The great systems of Antiquity*

The second period starts with Socrates and sees the appearance, over the limited span of one century, of the four great systems of Antiquity, the Platonic, the Aristotelian, the Epicurean, and the Stoic. Socrates represents a turning point in the history of philosophy (II, p. 3), not so much because of his philosophy as for the testimony of his life, ennobled by the unjust condemnation he had to suffer. To reconstruct the figure of Socrates, Tennemann turns to Xenophon (II, pp. 18 and 66; cf. also *Lehren*, pp. 173–178), not Plato (of whom he only uses the *Apology*). Tennemann's Socrates is still that of the early eighteenth century, that is, a asystematic thinker who criticised the separation between life and science.<sup>54</sup> A new image of Socrates as a genuine metaphysician, more Platonic (and Leibnizian), had been created at the end of the eighteenth century by Mendelssohn for the problem of immortality, and by Eberhard for the ethical problem, a new image whose traces are present, on a historiographical plane, in Tiedemann (see above, pp. 620–621, 630–631, and 660–661). Tennemann continues to adhere to Xenophon's image of Socrates, even though on a speculative level he is in harmony with the new epoch, and hence privileges Plato and his metaphysics, while separating them from the Socratic teaching. The result is a markedly reductive image of Socrates as a thinker, who, in his view, was not a speculative philosopher or a practical philosopher in a proper sense, but rather a teacher and an eminent example of moral behaviour.

Socrates, “as a popular philosopher (*popularer Philosoph*)”, who was more concerned about the perfecting of humanity and the application of philosophy to practical life rather than about science, [...] would not even deserve a place in the history of philosophy if, at the same time, he had not made philosophers aware of the existence of a new object which was worthy of them, thereby orienting the spirit of research in another direction” (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 3–4; see also pp. 42–43, 63–64, and *Lehren*, p. 191; on this judgement, cf. Zeller, p. 11). This new object is ethics: after Socrates no philosopher was to devote himself exclusively to the philosophy of nature, and after him “the enquiry into the principles and laws of moral behaviour was considered as the most important task of philosophy” (*Gesch.*, II, p. 4; see also p. 80).

But Socrates did not build a scientific system of ethics: “throughout his life he applied himself uniquely to educating *individuals* in virtue and happiness” (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 42, 51, and 188; see also *Lehren*, pp. 178–184). Socrates reacted to the crisis of his time by providing “education with a moral aim which developed and strengthened [...] moral feelings and related these purified representations to traditional religious concepts”: he “[purified] the *ancient system*”, instead of “referring moral and religious truths to principles and *founding a new moral system*”. Socrates “intended [...] to accord greater power and influence on practical

<sup>54</sup>Cf. especially B. Böhm, *Socrates im achtzehnten Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 1929), pp. 7–71 (on the image of Socrates spread by Fr. Charpentier), 72–111 (on the parallel drawn between Socrates and Christ), 112–158 (on moral religion), pp. 220–227 (on Mendelssohn's Socrates), pp. 227–238 (on Eberhard's Socrates).

life to the moral convictions that his pure and untainted feeling perceived of as truth", and he could only do this by confuting "the opinion that morality and happiness are opposed to each other, showing instead that they can be unified harmoniously [...]. In this way, Socrates laid the foundations of all subsequent Greek moral systems and, adhering to his example, all philosophers began their research by trying to understand what the highest good is and what it consists of for man" (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 9–10; cf. also p. 49). But although Socrates brought about a decisive turning point in philosophy with the advent of ethics, he was not a philosopher in a proper and technical sense. This explains the formulation of contrasting ethical systems on the part of some of his pupils: "since Socrates had not yet distinguished clearly between morality and happiness, but, with sound human intellect (*dem gesunden Menschenverstandes gemäß*), had limited himself to placing the destiny of man in the union of both, it is not surprising that Antisthenes and Aristippus [...] could take Socratic teaching as the basis for two different moral systems, the former presenting the *highest good* as virtue and an absence of needs, and the latter as the fulfilment of every need" (II, pp. 85–86).

After Socrates "the golden age of philosophy" began, namely that period "in which the human spirit displayed extraordinary activity and erected all those famous systems which were identified with philosophy over many centuries and engaged numerous thinkers in exegesis, applications, criticism, and corrections" (IV, p. 149; see also II, pp. 12–13). Philosophy no longer concerned itself with a single problem, the cosmological problem, as it had done in the previous age, but with all those objects "which are of some interest for man as a being who thinks and acts"; the spirit of research embraced "the entire realm of human knowledge, the foundations and laws of nature and freedom", and sought solutions "by means of reasoning deduced from principles" (IV, p. 150). As a result of this activity of the spirit the "four systems of philosophy", four different and opposite visions of the world, which – "not only in Greece, but also in Rome and in the epochs which followed in the history of all civilized peoples – found as many admirers and followers as adversaries and opponents and for a long time divided the world of scholars between them". Each of these systems "had its brilliant sides, which made it attractive, but also its mistakes and flaws, which discredited its reputation" (IV, pp. 150–151).

The four systems of Antiquity give expression to the four forms which are typical of philosophizing in all ages. Each system is upheld by a fundamental idea. For Plato, philosophy "is pure rational knowledge of that which is absolutely true, good, and beautiful, of supreme being and its relation to the world", and from the realm of philosophy "Plato excludes all that which is sensible, which is the object of experience", and mathematics itself. "Rationalism, which he founded, rested upon his thesis that reason – and not the senses – knows things as they are in themselves, and upon his vision of ideas. This was an unstable foundation, which ensured the autonomy of reason in the field of morals (*in dem Praktischen*) on one hand, but, also paved the way for all visionary enthusiasm of reason (*zu allen Schwärmereyen der Vernunft*)" (IV, p. 157).

"Plato's rationalism" was contrasted by the systems of "empiricism" created by Aristotle, Zeno, and Epicurus. "Rationalism complied with the inclination of

human reason to speculation and to go beyond the field of experience; by contrast, empiricism had the advantage of a natural foundation (*Natürlichkeit*) and its exclusion of all mystical roots in any of the components of human knowledge". But both Platonic rationalism and the empiricism characterizing the other three systems rested on the "erroneous conviction (*Wahn*) that it was possible to investigate the nature of things in themselves as a well-connected and ordered whole – either thanks to pure knowledge by reason (in the case of rationalism) or thanks to the mere perception of objects in the case of empiricism. Rationalism provided this knowledge through a pre-established harmony between reason and objects, whose forms were the ideas, while empiricism did this by means of an immediate union of these forms with the objects, so that reason abstracted them from the objects, presupposing either that nature was analogous to reason (Aristotle), or that an intelligence was the force universally active in nature (Zeno)". But Aristotle's and Zeno's empiricism "was still mingled with some hints of Plato's rationalism", and at its basis was "the idea of a whole determined by rational laws and ends", hence of an intelligence governing the world. "Epicurus totally rejected this idea, and constructed a third empirical system, in which there is no trace of a rational connection and what dominates are only blind necessity and chance" (IV, pp. 159–160).

Platonic rationalism and the empiricism of the other three systems shared "the presupposition of the knowability of things in themselves", and hence they were both forms of dogmatism. But the "interest" of reason at stake within each of these systems was different: "a different interest, either theoretical or practical, at times pure, at times operating together, imbued each system", and it was in this primacy either of the theoretical or the practical interest of reason (and "not in founding the statements they derived from") which, according to the well-known Kantian scheme, "the ultimate foundation of the belief that produced these systems in the thought of their authors and followers" consisted (IV, pp. 160–161).

(i) *Platonic "rationalism"*

Among the thinkers of this period, the figures on which Tennemann focuses his attention are Plato and Aristotle. His most interesting and original contribution certainly concerns the reconstruction of Platonic thought. Tennemann believed that the four volumes of his *System der Platonischen Philosophie* represented a fundamental contribution to the study of Plato, and indeed these volumes greatly contributed to the debate concerning individual issues: they made a first interesting attempt, for example, which for reasons of space was not included in the *Geschichte*, to solve the problem of chronology in the dialogues organically (*System*, I, pp. 115–125). As regards the overall interpretation of Plato's thought, the extensive section devoted to Plato in the *Geschichte* (II, pp. 190–528) takes up, more concisely but with no significant differences, the interpretation already given in the *System*.

Tennemann begins by addressing the problem of the sources of Plato's thought. Plato's dialogues and letters "explain fairly well the genesis of his system, but disclose only separate parts of it, some outlines of the whole, and in the main we see the outer facade of the building rather than its inner structure" (II, p. 20). But

the dialogues and letters, while representing “a document which attests more to his philosophical and literary spirit than to his real system”, nevertheless remain “for us the only *pure and uncorrupted source*” for his philosophy; “without them, by exclusively relying on what others said about Plato, we would form a rather incomplete and false idea of his philosophemes” (II, p. 203; see also *System*, I, p. XVI). For Tennemann, there is no question that a Platonic system does exist: in Plato’s writings “we frequently find ideas which are developed with too much interest to be considered as totally random intuitions of his mind [. . .]; and if we continue to pursue these ideas, they lead us to suspect the existence of a well elaborated system that his writings reveal only in the background, not in a visible form” (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 204–205).

According to Tennemann, Plato’s system is to be found in the doctrines taught inside his school; these are the so-called unwritten doctrines: “he had a *secret philosophy* (*eine geheime Philosophie*), which was not destined for a broader public, just as his pupil Aristotle had an *esoteric* and an *exoteric* philosophy” (II, p. 205; see also p. 220).<sup>55</sup> Plato himself hints at the existence of these doctrines in *Letter VII* and in the *Phaedrus*, and this is repeatedly attested by Aristotle too (II, pp. 205–217). Furthermore, affirms Tennemann, we can “establish, at least in general, the subjects [. . .] on which Plato used to lecture his students”. Above all, “in his secret philosophy he dealt with the relationship between God and world, a sort of theodicy [. . .], the first attempt at developing a metaphysics of the supersensible”; moreover, “according to what Aristotle has handed down to us about Plato’s secret philosophy, it must also have contained a metaphysics of nature, because he mentions some research into space and the elements”. Plato must also have discussed “whether in philosophy we should choose the analytic or the synthetic method”, and, finally, it is unimaginable that Plato limited himself to theoretical philosophy, “hence, this secret philosophy included a complete system of philosophy [. . .]: theoretical philosophy, practical philosophy, and logic” (II, pp. 217–220).

Plato’s secret philosophy is therefore nothing “mysterious”: it is “nothing other than [. . .] a scientific philosophy distinct from a popular philosophy”. This distinction is the source of both those unwritten doctrines which contain the system in its scientific form, and the doctrines of the dialogues, which have no systematic form and are meant to be diffused (II, pp. 220–222). The Platonic system is therefore to be found in the esoteric teaching provided inside the Academy; it contains nothing mysterious, nothing in contrast to the dialogues, but is totally reconstructible on

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<sup>55</sup>Hegel was to judge Tennemann’s theory as “nonsense”: Tennemann, writes Hegel, seems to believe that “the philosopher possesses his thoughts as if they were external objects: a philosophical idea, however, is something totally different, and instead of being possessed by, it possesses a man. When philosophers discourse on philosophical subjects, they follow of necessity the course of their ideas; they cannot keep them in their pockets; and when one man speaks to another, if his words have any meaning at all, they must contain the idea present to him. It is easy enough to hand over an external object, but the communication of ideas requires a certain skill; and there is always something esoteric in this, in such a way that philosophers are never purely exoteric” (Hegel<sup>1</sup>, II, pp. 21–22; Hegel<sup>2</sup>, p. 377).



the basis of the dialogues themselves, which contain the general framework of the Platonic system that Tennemann believes he has identified.

In his *System* Tennemann had discussed the sources of Plato's thought: not only had he totally denied the value of Apuleius and Plutarch, and greatly reduced the importance of Cicero, but he had also, in a polemic against Tiedemann, considerably diminished the value of Aristotle's testimony (*Syst.*, I, pp. XII–XIV and XXII–XXIV) – the inevitable result of his acknowledgement of the centrality of the unwritten doctrines and their full compatibility with the doctrines contained in the dialogues. Another problem raised by recourse to the dialogues as sources for Plato's thought might have been the relation between these texts and Socrates's doctrines, but Tennemann had already excluded any connection between Plato's texts and Socratic teaching as reconstructed exclusively on the basis of Xenophon's testimony.

Tennemann's intention, therefore, is to reconstruct Plato's "system" by using only the dialogues: "I choose Plato himself as my guide, and his writings as the only sources of his philosophy" (*Syst.*, I, p. XXIV). But Plato's "system" is not present in the dialogues: they certainly "contain parts of his system, but they are dismembered (*zerstückelt*)" and mixed with digressions; the historian "has to reconnect these impaired parts (*diese zerriütteten Theile*), bring the statements under their principles, and above all be sure of the first principle sustaining his [Plato's] system, so as to present this system on the basis of his writings, in so far as this is possible without his presence as a guide [. . .]. What facilitates this task and gives us hope of succeeding is the conviction, which we draw from the work accomplished so far [i.e. the *System*], that Plato actually had a system of philosophy and that he discloses some traces of this system here and there in his writings. Otherwise, we should either abandon all hope of knowing something about Plato's philosophy, or content ourselves with an arbitrary order and connection linking the scattered statements" (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 221–222).

In his *System*, Tennemann had explicitly declared that he had used critical philosophy (in the version provided by Reinhold) as a guiding thread to reduce the "dismembered parts" of Platonic thought to a system (*Syst.*, I, pp. V–VII; see also *Lehren*, pp. VII–VIII). In his *Geschichte*, he does not make such a clear statement, but the general framework of the system within which he arranges the material taken from the dialogues derives from Kant, and he adapts this material to the typical requirements of critical philosophy. Tennemann approaches Plato's system by way of "Plato's analysis of the attempts made by philosophizing reason up to that moment". Plato believed that the moral, political, and religious crisis of his time could only be solved by a revolution in the field of philosophy, but, in his view, none of the existing systems was suitable for this purpose (*Gesch.*, II, p. 225–226). Tennemann quotes the well-known passage from the *Sophist* in which Plato opposes the "friends of forms" and the "children of the earth", and – according to the Kant's model of antinomies – presents this as an opposition between "spiritualism" and "materialism", "rationalism" and "empiricism" (II, pp. 229–234). Plato "could adhere to neither of these systems; and since he acknowledged that each of them was neither totally true nor totally false, he had to work out a system which, on the

one hand, removed the difficulties presented by all these opposite systems and, on the other, incorporated what was true in them" (II, pp. 234–235; see also *Syst.*, I, pp. 283–288, and II, pp. 78–79). Plato did not yield to the temptation of scepticism, as did Pyrrho and his followers later, but rather "tried to identify the causes of this dissent" (*Gesch.*, II, p. 235), and therefore came to enquire into the "possibility of philosophical knowledge in general", as a preliminary philosophical problem, whose solution is absolutely necessary if we wish to avoid proceeding at random: "thanks to this preliminary work, he tried to make his way towards a system which joined together what was true in all existing systems and banished what was false in them and which thus departed from empiricism and laid the foundations for a pure original knowledge, without denying experience but rather – by defining the boundaries of both ways of knowing – restoring them both to their rights" (II, pp. 240–241).

In this way, Tennemann believes he has found the "key to Plato's philosophy" (II, p. 223) and he can now outline the "plan" according to which his philosophy must be dealt with: first of all, we have to "present his research into the *concept of philosophy and science*", and then "his system according to its principles" (II, p. 241). The first part, entitled 'Einleitung in die Philosophie' (II, pp. 241–284), presents the concept of philosophy and an outline of the framework of the system, and illustrates, in the following order, the distinction between opinion and science, the cognitive faculty, and the three parts of the system, namely, logic, theoretical philosophy, and practical philosophy.

Logic, or "dialectic", constitutes the first part of the system and contains Plato's theory of knowledge (II, pp. 284–344). The frameworks used by Tennemann are derived from Kantianism and even Plato's terminology is translated into Kant's technical language. For Plato, sensibility still does not provide knowledge, which requires the "perceptive faculty (*Wahrnehmungsvermögen*) or *doxa*, or the understanding (*Verstand*) combined with sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*)"; but this faculty shows us merely "that which appears (*erscheint*) [...], so these judgements do not contain any necessity, but just an opinion or a belief (*pístis*)". But besides an "empirical faculty of knowing" there is a "pure faculty of knowing, or *noesis*": for Plato, examples of "representations" of this latter faculty are primarily the "concepts of species" (*Gattungsbegriffe*), which the understanding uses as principles for formal unity, but also moral concepts, and the rational concepts (*Vernunftbegriffe*) of absolute and unconditioned (II, pp. 290–295; see *Syst.*, II, p. 106). According to Tennemann, Plato's ideas are these conceptual representations; but they are also the objects corresponding to these rational concepts: "things in themselves", thinkable only by reason, the "noumena" which "constitute the content of pure thought and can be known *a priori*" (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 295–296; see *Syst.*, pp. 120–123).

Hence, ideas have not only a logical meaning, as conditions of thinking and knowing, but also a "metaphysical meaning", which Plato introduces in order to found the objective validity of these concepts *a priori*: "they are not merely concepts under which reason tries to order the multiplicity of knowledge and draw from it an artificial system – just as the botanist does with regard to the plant world – but the object of the idea is the essence of the thing itself, the thing in itself". The idea

is therefore an “*a priori* concept of the human reason; that which is represented through this concept is the thing in itself, which corresponds approximately to this concept, and would coincide with it completely if human reason were the *original intelligence* (*die ursprüngliche Intelligenz*) from whose activity things themselves received their existence. But this intelligence is only the divinity, from which human reason derived. The *original form of things* (*Urform der Dinge*) is in divine reason, and the idea refers to this as its object” (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 298–300; see *Syst.*, II, pp. 124–127).

As is now evident, Tennemann interprets Plato’s theory of ideas by applying Kantian frameworks and concepts (*KrV*, A 568 B 596) to the markedly traditional interpretation – rooted in Neoplatonism and Augustinianism and taken up in the humanistic age – of ideas considered to be thoughts of the “divine understanding”.<sup>56</sup> In the same period, this interpretation had been questioned, for example, by Tiedemann (see above, pp. 661–662), whom Tennemann does not mention here, while he names Plessing and Schulze “among the asserters of the substantiality of ideas”.<sup>57</sup> Tennemann rejects the interpretation of Platonic ideas as “ingenerated, eternal substances” and hints at the arguments of Plato’s *Parmenides* (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 302–304; see *Syst.*, II, pp. 80–101). The testimony of Aristotle is not mentioned but, as previously said, Tennemann mainly rejects it, and, in the chapter on the Stagirite, he maintained that, in interpreting ideas as substances, Aristotle “has thoroughly misunderstood Plato’s theory of ideas” (*Gesch.*, III, pp. 25–26, 50–51; see *System*, II, pp. 146–148). The exposition of Platonic “dialectic” continues with the doctrine of reminiscence (*Gesch.*, II, pp. 304–313) and Plato’s contribution to formal logic (II, pp. 313–344) which, in Plato’s view – note that here Tennemann refers to Kant again – “is not simply the science concerned with the rules of thinking but is aimed at finding truth; hence it is not a *canon*, but an *organ* of reason” (II, p. 313).

The second part deals with Platonic metaphysics (or “physiology”) (II, pp. 344–528). The organization of the subjects conforms to a systemization of a Kantian nature: first of all the theoretical section, then the practical section. The theoretical section begins with the problems relating to ontology, discussing them in two chapters devoted, respectively, to the “fundamental metaphysical concepts and principles” (II, pp. 346–363), and to the distinction between “things in

<sup>56</sup>On this point, see the exhaustive observations formulated by M. Isnardi Parente, ‘Noterelle marginali alle hegeliane *Lezioni di storia della filosofia*. La dottrina platonica delle idee’, *La Cultura*, IX (1971), especially pp. 152–157.

<sup>57</sup>Tennemann refers to the extensive works by F.V.L. Plessing, *Memnonium, oder Versuche zur Enthüllung der Geheimnisse des Alterthums* (Leipzig: Weygand, 1787), 2 vols (the second volume is devoted to Plato) and *Versuche zur Aufklärung der Philosophie des ältesten Alterthums* (Leipzig: Crusius, 1788–1790) 2 vols (the first volume is devoted to Plato), and to the short but significant Latin dissertation by Gottlob Ernst Schulze, *De ideis Platonis dissertatio philosophico historica* [...] (Witttemberg: Dürr, 1786), pp. 28 (on these texts, see M. Wundt, ‘Die Wiederentdeckung Platons im 18. Jahrhundert’, *Blätter für deutsche Philosophie*, X (1941), p. 156; A. Pupi, ‘Introduzione’ to G.E. Schulze, *Enesidemo* (Bari, 1971), pp. 17–19; T. Gloyna, ‘Idee – Substanz oder Begriff? Zum Wandel des Platon-Verständnisses im 18. Jahrhundert’, in *Platonismus im Idealismus*, ed. B. Mojsisch et al. (Leipzig, 2003), pp. 7–10 (on Plessing).

themselves and phenomena" (II, pp. 363–374); then it addresses the issues relating to special metaphysics: theology (II, pp. 374–393), cosmology (II, pp. 394–430), and psychology (II, 430–468). The section concerning practical philosophy deals, in this order, with ethics (II, pp. 471–506), the doctrine of the state (II, pp. 506–519), and pedagogy (II, pp. 519–526).

(ii) *Aristotelian "empiricism"*

In the case of Aristotle, Tennemann does not claim to be equally as innovative. He acknowledges, for example, Buhle's contributions in this field; but his interpretation of Plato compels him to revise the traditional image of Aristotle on some points. The section devoted to Aristotle (III, pp. 17–330) is of the same length as that concerning Plato, but the interpretation he gives is much closer to the eighteenth-century tradition (cf. Kant, *KrV*, A 854 B 882). Tennemann saw elements of critical philosophy in Plato's thought; in Aristotle's philosophy he sees nothing other than a form of empiricist dogmatism, without the systematic rigour that this kind of philosophy was to adopt in the modern age with Locke. On this point, without naming them, Tennemann objects to those scholars who, like Buhle, with reference to *De anima*, "granted Aristotle with the merit of having been the first to subject the cognitive faculty to critical analysis [. . .]. They are not aware that, in supporting their thesis by mainly referring to his work on the soul, they demonstrate exactly the opposite. Indeed, his empiricism is not the result of his research on the cognitive faculty, but is rather its presupposition and constitutes the basis on which it is founded"; indeed, *De anima* is a rather late work, and in it Aristotle "tries to adjust the *physiology of the human understanding* to the *principles of empiricism*" (*Gesch.*, III, p. 53; on Buhle see above, p. 809).

Tennemann persistently maintains that Aristotle had gained very little understanding of Plato's theory of ideas. As previously said, this is the reason why he had been unwilling to take Aristotle into consideration as a witness concerning the theory of ideas. The Aristotelian discussion of Plato's theory is only briefly outlined by Tennemann (III, pp. 48–50). In his view, Aristotle even came to hold (in *Metaph.* 993 a 1–5, as opposed to *Phaed.* 75B–76C) "that Plato taught not only that ideas in human beings are innate but also that men come into being with full consciousness of ideas, which is a false interpretation which wrongs Plato, just as Leibniz was wronged in the modern age by distorting the meaning of innate concepts, with no fault on his part" (III, p. 50). If Aristotle came to misunderstand the theory of ideas concerning a point on which Plato had already expressed himself quite clearly, it is no wonder that he did the same with much more complex passages: "Aristotle's thought rested on thoroughly different viewpoints, from which he found it difficult to penetrate the spirit proper to this doctrine". The idea on which Aristotle's system is grounded (*Hauptgrund*, *Hauptidee*) is exactly the opposite to that on which Plato's system is based: Aristotle is an empiricist, namely, he thinks that "ideas derive from experience by means of abstraction from the objects of the senses" (III, pp. 47, 51, and 53; on this judgement cf. Hegel<sup>2</sup>, p. 466).

But Aristotle's empiricism, unlike Locke's (see below, p. 898), seems to be more a presupposition than a well argued theory: "in vain one looks in Aristotle's writings

for proof of so important a statement" (III, p. 47). The grounds for Aristotelian empiricism are perhaps to be sought in its opposition to Platonism: Aristotle, together with Plato, believes that without concepts there is no science, but he does not understand the reasons which had urged Plato to speak of a non-empirical origin of all concepts, including the concepts of species, since the latter can certainly be derived by abstraction. For Tennemann, "if we look at this question impartially, we find that they were both right and both wrong. In human knowledge, there are concepts of two different species: some are drawn from experience, some have another origin. Aristotle and Plato were both wrong in assuming too unilaterally and generally what was true in their theories. There are *ideas*, namely *pure rational concepts*, but this does not mean that all rational concepts are ideas; indeed, reason, using the concepts that the understanding has derived from experience, can abstract from all the restricting conditions of sensible perception, that is to say make them universal. This must have impressed Aristotle, but he was equally unilateral when, due to the fact that some concepts regarded as non-empirical are indeed such, he proclaimed all concepts and all knowledge to be empirical. If we look at the proof, Aristotle's *empiricism* is no better grounded than Plato's *rationalism*. Aristotle bases himself on the proof of experience of certain concepts formed through abstraction, whence he presupposes, albeit without proof, that what is true of some, holds true for all" (III, p. 52). The opposition between Plato and Aristotle is situated within a framework of clearly Kantian origin, and the distinction between he who errs by defect and he who errs by excess is adopted as a criterion for evaluating and compiling a historiographical classification.

After this introduction, Tennemann's account of the system progresses by adjusting the subdivisions of the Aristotelian tradition to those outlined by Kant. The first part of the system sets out the laws of thought and is represented by the logic of the *Organon*; it is followed by theoretical philosophy, subdivided into physics, cosmology, psychology, and first philosophy, or metaphysics, which in turn is split into ontology and theology. The system ends with practical philosophy, divided into ethics, politics, and economics. With his *Organon*, "Aristotle did not mean to subject the faculty of thinking to an examination so as to draw from it the laws of thought in a complete form, but he merely intended to formulate the theory of deductive inference (*Theorie des Schliessens*) for scientific use"; hence, against Buhle's opinion, Tennemann maintains that Aristotle's *Organon* contains nothing reminiscent of a "critical propaedeutic". Aristotle's logic "is nothing other than the science of syllogistic reasoning", but, since for Tennemann (and for Kant) formal logic can be reduced to syllogistic reasoning, "in Aristotle's writings on logic there is more scientific unity than in the texts of many modern logicians" (III, pp. 76–77; cf. Kant, *KrV*, B VIII).

Aristotle's theoretical philosophy is conditioned by his empiricist dogmatism; he limits himself to seeking the conditioned in nature; even the ultimate foundation of the real must be found within the domain of nature, resting on the principle of dogmatism by which "if the conditioned is given, then the complete series of conditions is given with it as well". It follows from this that Aristotle "defines no clear boundary between that which belongs to the science of nature and that which

belongs to metaphysics, and mixes the immanent principles of natural phenomena with the transcendent principles, dealing for example – in the *Physics* too – with the supreme being as the ultimate cause of all motion; or he transforms what lies within our manner of seeing and judging nature, such as finality, into a constitutive element of nature itself. In general, Aristotle does not distinguish between the principles of the understanding (which, when applied to external perceptions, are the fundamental laws of nature, since they make nature possible as an object of knowledge) and the laws derived by observation, or between the formal and the material laws of nature. Indeed, according to his view, all the principles of natural knowledge are grounded in nature and are drawn from it by means of observation and abstraction” (III, pp. 108–109).

The section on physics and cosmology is extensive and thorough (III, pp. 111–175). As regards psychology, Tennemann presents the contents of books II and III of the *De anima* (III, pp. 176–211), and points out the naturalistic aspects above all and Aristotle’s fundamental lack of interest in the metaphysical problem of immortality (III, p. 207). First philosophy, or metaphysics, is subdivided into ontology (III, pp. 222–239) – which is reduced to a philosophical lexicon containing the definitions of the concepts of being, substance and accident, matter and form, act and potency – and theology, consisting of a brief summary of chapters 6–10 of book XII of the *Metaphysics* (III, pp. 240–257). Tennemann lays emphasis on the fact that the moral aspect is absent from the Aristotelian concept of God (III, pp. 249, 252–257). The final section deals with practical philosophy in general (III, pp. 257–302) and with politics (III, pp. 303–327). As for the content of Aristotelian ethics, it is defined as a “moderate eudaemonism”, and here Tennemann’s judgement is the same as that of Kant (III, pp. 289–295). More generally, Aristotelian ethics can be defined as a descriptive rather than a prescriptive ethics, and this, in Tennemann’s view, represents its limitation. In his short conclusion, Tennemann deals with Aristotle’s merits, which were considerable, just as his influence was decisive, albeit not immediately afterwards but in the Middle Ages and the Modern Age (III, pp. 327–330).

### C. Dogmatism, scepticism, mysticism

Let us go back to the description of the development of Greek thought after the period that Tennemann defines as “the golden age of philosophy”, namely, the age of the great systematic structures, the ideal models which, in all times, have inspired human thought in its constructive dogmatic phase. After Zeno, the “philosophical spirit” underwent a profound change: it ceased to be “productive” and to aspire above all to systematism; indeed, it was characterised in this period by the need to verify the existing systems as well as the tendency to question and criticize all philosophical discoveries, “since a reliable principle for knowledge was still lacking” (II, pp. 13–14). Despite the “astonishing progress” made in this period, the four systems “partially rested on unfounded or unilateral presuppositions and on uncertain principles”; each system claimed to be true but, precisely “with regard to the major questions”, the assertions made by philosophers were discordant and contradictory. “The path towards science (*zur Wissenschaft*) had already been

opened up; the human mind could not abandon it, but neither could it proceed any further. The activity of reason had already been awoken and was by then too lively to be blocked by unexpected difficulties". Philosophers substantially agreed concerning the purpose of philosophy and its partitions, whereas they disagreed as to which route was to be taken: "they were certainly in accord on the fact that it is the faculty of thinking which, by developing concepts, provides this knowledge for us; but where this faculty acquires the concepts from – whether from itself or from experience – was the controversial point. After Plato's rationalism had been abandoned, the latter direction was the most frequently adopted; yet, along this direction [that of empiricism], at least three systems had already appeared, which were totally different from one another" (IV, pp. 178–179).

But the path of empiricism could not be abandoned before a new system could show a different route or before the mistakes in the ways of proceeding experimented so far had been discovered. There was no doubt that a decisive turning point could have occurred "if the opposite standpoint had been adopted [opposite to both rationalism and empiricism, whose contrast is merely relative since they share the presupposition of all dogmatism], namely the standpoint that it is not representations that must conform to objects, but, on the contrary, objects to representations; and it could have taken place if attention had been paid primarily to the cognitive faculty, rather than to things, and if the constitutive and directive laws of that faculty had been studied. But the human mind was not yet sufficiently mature and strong for this". The philosophical events of this third period all fall into this situation of stasis: since the human mind "could neither move neither forward or backward", it was natural to expect that "the disagreement among thinkers, which had endured up to that time, ended up in overt conflict, and that one party tried to hold on to what it presumed to be knowledge, while the other party disputed it" (IV, pp. 179–180).

The third period is thus reduced to the opposition between the dogmatism of the Stoics and the scepticism of the Academics. Tennemann judges the series of adherents to Platonic "rationalism" to end with Xenocrates, and rejects as thoroughly "useless" the traditional subdivision of the history of the Academy into three or five phases: the Academy is but a place, and each thinker has his individual personality to be compared with the Stoic at whom he aims his criticisms (IV, p. 187). Tennemann's assessment of the scepticism of the Academics is highly positive: they "laid the foundations of true skepsis, which from that moment onwards was never completely extinguished and, in varied forms and fashions, emerged again and again, aroused the spirit of research whenever it seemed to slumber, restrained within boundaries immoderate speculation, and kept the human mind constantly active" (IV, p. 185). The criticisms raised by the Academics were almost exclusively aimed at the Stoic criterion of sensible evidence (see IV, p. 434), and practically never concerned ethics; in any case, the scepticism of the Academics "never dared to declare duty and virtue chimeras". Even Carneades, the Academic who, on the basis of the testimonies available, is the most difficult to place within Tennemann's scheme, was to limit himself to show "the difficulties arising from the conflict between the absoluteness of duty and natural instinct". By saying this,

Tennemann intended to emphasize the fact that “the skepsis of the Academics was indeed support for the belief that practical truths contain the only certainty man can rely on” (IV, pp. 436–437; see also p. 391, and V, p. 3). The shared interest in ethics explains the convergence of Academic and Stoic elements in the eclecticism embraced by Philo of Larissa and especially Antiochus of Ascalon, who “while remaining an Academic, almost converted to the Stoic system” (IV, pp. 391–392).

For Tennemann, the following age, which closes the cycle of Greek thought, is not “rich” in achievements as far as philosophy is concerned. Greek schools persist and conform with the spirit of the time. Cicero’s eclecticism presents no originality, and we should mention it only for its importance as a source (V, pp. 35–36). Epicureanism continues to exist unchanged and, as usual, appears concerned with “fostering the interest of the understanding and annihilating in man all influence exerted by the ideas produced by reason” (V, pp. 23–24; Lucretius is only briefly dealt with on pp. 134–139). Aristotelianism continues almost exclusively through the work of commentators (V, pp. 27 and 182–195). With Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius (V, pp. 140–182), Stoicism merely develops the ethical side of the system, and “a history of philosophy that has chosen as the object of its attention the course and progress of philosophy as a science cannot dwell upon them” (V, pp. 142–143; cf. also pp. 24–25 and 43). The mystical feeling of the time exerted greater influence on Pythagoreanism, with Apollonius of Tyana and his biographer Philostratus, and on Platonism, with Philo, Plutarch, Numenius of Apamea, Albinus, and the physician Galen himself (V, pp. 195–208 and 223–267). Both these currents, which were also affected by Oriental elements, anticipate some issues addressed by Alexandrian Neoplatonism (see, for example, V, p. 33).

But the two major trends of thought characterizing this period are the scepticism of Aenesidemus, Agrippa, and Sextus Empiricus (V, pp. 44–97, 97–103, and 267–396), and the Neoplatonism of Plotinus and his successors, until the closure of the school of Athens (VI, pp. 19–187 and 187–376). As for Hebrew philosophy, the Kabbalah, and more generally the philosophies of the East, Tennemann wonders whether they should “have a place in the history of philosophy”: if we consider “the weighty influence they exerted on the literature and philosophy of the Middle Ages”, we would answer positively, and, even in recent times, there have been “eminent historians, like Tiedemann and Buhle,” who have dealt with them; but “a closer examination of the content and form of these philosophemes” induces us to recognize that the reasons for totally excluding them prevail (V, pp. 36–38; by contrast, the *Grundriss*, pp. 131–137, devotes a section to Hebrew philosophy, the Kabbalah, and the gnostics).

Tennemann’s interest is primarily centred upon scepticism. With regard to Aenesidemus, he discusses his alleged Heracliteanism, extensively expounding the ten “tropes”, or sceptic reasoning as well as the criticisms of the possibility of knowing causes (V, pp. 60–79 and 79–97), whereas, with regard to Sextus, he reviews in detail (V, pp. 267–396) the arguments formulated against logic, physics (in particular those relating to space and time), and ethics, which are contained in the eleven books of *Adversus mathematicos* (but also quotes passages from the *Pyrrhonian Hypotyposes*). In evaluating scepticism, Tennemann finally places it



within a Kantian framework. For example, he discusses Aenesidemus' criticism of the Academics as related by Photius: it seems that Aenesidemus claimed that the scepticism of the Academics is contradictory because it is partial. Tennemann defends the Academics, while he judges Aenesidemus' absolute scepticism to be contradictory. In his view, this is due to the lack of a clear "distinction between a solely *logical* and a solely *material* criterion of truth". The Academics, who formulated their criticisms exclusively against the Stoic criterion of truth, "comprehensive representation", "denied the criterion of truth in regard to the material aspect, thereby not denying logical and moral truths. Aenesidemus disregards this distinction and accuses the Academics of being incoherent, declaring that scepticism is defensible and well-grounded only if it is universal" (V, pp. 52–53).

Tennemann seems to have a more positive judgement of Sextus' scepticism, which is more temperate and admits, for example, that beyond our representations (*phaenomena*) there exists a reality which remains unknown to us: this is "an opposition, that we cannot express better than by the distinction, introduced by critical philosophy, between *appearance* (*Erscheinung*) and *thing in itself* (*Ding an sich*)" (V, pp. 280–281). Sextus seems to be aware that absolute scepticism itself changes into a "negative dogmatism" and condemns itself to self-destruction; indeed, he observes that "scepticism goes beyond the limits it has imposed on itself when it tries to demonstrate that the very notion of demonstrative knowledge is contradictory in itself". Sextus is aware of this difficulty, and intends to avoid it – observes Tennemann – by presenting the sceptic doubt as a "psychological fact", an "individual point of view", rather than a "postulate or a rule meant for the Sceptic". But this is a step backward which does not solve the problem of the dogmatic outcome of scepticism: the self-destruction of absolute scepticism should have brought it to admit that there are "laws of thought" (*Gesetze des Denkens*), the first logical principles, and consequently that there is "something certain for knowing" as well (*etwas Gewisses für das Erkennen*), and to "recognize at least a well-defined sphere of possible knowledge as well as the exact boundaries of scepticism". By contrast, Sextus goes backward by not perceiving the possibility of the critical question, and "views scepticism not as a means for certain future knowledge, but as a result and the ultimate purpose of all research" (V, pp. 284–291).

Even with its limitations, Greek scepticism remains "a memorable phenomenon in the history of the efforts undertaken by human reason", if only because it allows us to complete our knowledge of the great Greek dogmatic philosophy. With Sextus Empiricus "the sceptic spirit disappeared; for some time it was overwhelmed and absorbed by dogmatism". Tennemann wonders why this could happen: the responsibility is partially on Greek scepticism itself, whose one-sided attacks "involuntarily crowned the spirit of doubt, thus exhausting the spirit of research" (V, pp. 34–35). But the main reason, according to Tennemann, is to be found in the mystical spirit of the time: with Neoplatonism, "dogmatic philosophy" takes a "different direction", which shields it from the attacks of the sceptics, who are no longer faced with "arguments formulated by speculative reason", but with the conviction that "the absolute, towards which reason ceaselessly tends, is not grasped

by means of thought but of an immediate intuition". Now scepticism has no other possibility but to withdraw: it was not confronted by reasoning but by the "truth put forward by a philosophizing visionary", the "flights of poetizing fantasy". This is the "only example" in the history of philosophy in which the "counterbalancing" force represented by scepticism is missing (VI, pp. 3–5).

In reality, for Tennemann, Neoplatonism represents the final degeneration of dogmatic philosophy: "now an age begins in which the tendency of reason to build a home in the realm of the supersensible with a lively and exuberant imagination, degenerated into total visionary enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*)"; Tennemann even wonders whether dealing with it is worthwhile or would it be rather advisable "to change direction and tackle epochs in which reason nourished more moderate expectations and efforts and remained within the domain of actual knowledge"; yet he decides to deal with it merely because "omitting a step would inevitably break the connection of history" (VI, p. 5). Nevertheless, the sixth volume is entirely devoted to Neoplatonism. The treatment consists of two parts: the first deals with Plotinus (VI, pp. 19–187), the second with the developments and diffusion of Neoplatonism thanks to Porphyry (VI, pp. 202–246), Iamblichus (VI, 247–284), Proclus (VI, pp. 284–359), Isidore (VI, pp. 359–361), and Damascius (VI, pp. 361–375).

Tennemann provides lengthy summaries of Plotinus's *Enneads* and tries to outline a systematic order which is missing in Plotinus's writings because it is also missing in his thought (VI, p. 50). His judgement on the system, however, rests entirely on concepts of clear Kantian derivation. Plotinus transforms Plato's "rationalistic dogmatism" into a mystical pantheism; Plato believed that "the supersensible could be attained [...] by mere thinking, by a logical employment of ideas"; sceptic criticism cast doubt on the rationalistic metaphysics of Platonism. Christian faith, in turn, in an "immediate divine revelation", diffused among the pagans "an illusory persuasion about an immediate communion with the realm of spirits, which was based on a *particular inner sense*" (VI, pp. 44–46). Plotinus was convinced therefore he could "defend the honour of reason and philosophy by fantasizing about a *higher cognitive faculty which rises above the scientific use of common reason (gemeine Vernunft)* [...]. Philosophy receives principles from reason, and the latter, in turn, from an illumination from above. This is the first and foremost difference between Plato and Plotinus's philosophy. This exerted a decisive influence on the entire content because [Plato's] pure thought was thus transformed into an *intellectual intuition*". Plato is a dualist, and in his view, the world "consists of two substances which are different as to their essence: the extended (*ausgedehnte*) and the knowing (*vorstellende Substanz*). According to Plotinus, God is the real foundation of all things, both according to matter and according to form, and there is only one kind of substance, the knowing substance; *space* and *matter* are nothing other than a illusory *appearance (Schein)* of reality, a shadow of the spirit" (VI, pp. 46–48). For Plato, philosophy proceeds from the bottom to the top, from the conditioned to the condition, whereas Plotinus proceeds downwards by deduction: he "confuses 'nature' and 'supernature' and weaves them together, so that nature finally disappears. He does not lead man to God but God to man"; Plotinus holds that the intellectual intuition of the divine is "a fact

which cannot be proved”, and this dispenses us from all research (VI, pp. 49–50). Plotinus’s philosophy is nothing other than “visionary enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*) arranged together in a systematic form” (VI, p. 166), and it contains “germs of the systems” developed in the modern age: “Spinoza’s pantheism, Leibniz’s monadology and theodicy, and the recent transcendent philosophy of nature [i.e. Schelling] share several points with Plotinus’s philosophy” (VI, pp. 174–175).

After Plotinus, Neoplatonism increased its systematism, especially with Proclus, who studied Aristotle’s philosophy in Athens too and became experienced in the art of logic, and can be therefore regarded as a “prelude to Scholasticism” (VI, p. 291). It was only the diffusion of Christianity which provided this philosophy – under another name – with a “solid shelter” which enabled it to last through time (VI, p. 19). In the *Geschichte*, the Christian Patristic thought which developed in parallel with Neoplatonism, constitutes the first part of the subsequent period, ranging from the earlier diffusion of Christianity to the dissolution of Scholasticism, whereas in the *Grundriss*, whose framework is predominantly of a didactic nature, it corresponds to the last phase of ancient thought.

#### 11.2.4.3.2 Patristics and Scholasticism

With Neoplatonism “Greek philosophy ended its [historical] cycle” and “had fallen asleep in supernaturalism”. But it was not yet completely asleep: “the philosophical dreams of a fantasizing reason and the adventurous tales of a sophistic speculation” which characterized pagan Neoplatonism, represent “the last traces of mental independence” and autonomous philosophizing. The limited speculative consistency of these philosophies brought about a gradual waning of interest and the defeat of philosophy in its conflict against Christian theology: “but with this, philosophy itself ceased to be an occupation specific to learned people” (VII, pp. 3–4).

The affirmation of Christianity marked an important turning point, but from his Kantian, Enlightenment standpoint, Tennemann judged it negatively as far as the history of philosophy is concerned. After initially despising Greek philosophy as an activity produced by self-confident reason, Christian theologians took possession of it in order to use its tools in their conflict against pagan philosophers: we can therefore speak of a “philosophy of the Church Fathers” only improperly, because they subordinated philosophy to revelation; since there was no “intention of erecting a system of rational knowledge, but justifying, defending, and spreading the system of positive theology”, the thought of the Church fathers “does not properly belong to the domain of the history of philosophy”. We ought to speak of the Church Fathers merely because, thanks to them, some aspects of ancient philosophy were handed down to the modern age: “theology was the medium philosophy had to pass through, before – purified and fortified after long fruitless efforts – starting a new existence”. From this viewpoint, Patristics and Scholasticism form one period, the fifth, in which “philosophy is at the service of theology, and every autonomous effort made by reason towards scientific knowledge derived from rational principles ceases” (VII, pp. 4–6).

Tennemann devotes a section to Christianity (VII, pp. 21–86). The religion of Jesus Christ is a purely moral religion: “Jesus united morals and religion, without subordinating the former to the latter, and removed a separation which had lasted too long, damaging the process of the moral perfecting of humanity” (VII, p. 33; see also pp. 36–46). Only later on did Christianity gradually turn into a religion in which revelation prevailed over reason, a religion founded on a set of dogmas, above all that of Jesus Christ’s divine nature (VII, pp. 46–60). In this way “the balance existing in early Christianity between supernaturalism and rationalism was destroyed, the former was given prominence with a sort of superiority, becoming stronger thanks to a series of hypotheses which were allowed without being proved, as though they were axioms” (VII, p. 59). Tennemann emphasizes the difficulty of reconciling the faith in revelation with reason and philosophy. Christian speculation, both that of the age of the Fathers and subsequently that of Scholasticism, can all be traced back to the category of “*supernaturalism*”, which is nothing other than “speculation modified by the belief in an immediate divine revelation, distinguishing itself from philosophical speculation by the fact that it begins where the latter ends and that it appropriates effortlessly, as if it were a gift from outside, that which philosophy achieves through the effort of thinking” (VII, p. 78).

The whole period spans fourteen centuries. In the age of Patristics, “philosophy is subordinated to theology”, which it supplies with weapons for attack and defence. The philosophy employed to this end is Neoplatonism and “a dogmatic system and hierarchy take shape and increasingly constrain the rights of reason”. In the following age, “with the help of dialectic and Aristotelian philosophy, theology and philosophy gradually merge into an indissoluble whole” (VII, pp. 16–17). The overall judgement of the period is the totally negative assessment of the Protestant leaning historiographical tradition. Nevertheless, the doctrines of the Fathers of the Church (the heretical movements are also included here) and above all those of the Scholastics are described in full detail, with frequent and extended quotations from the texts, partially taken from Tiedemann. Tennemann discusses the origins and divisions of Scholasticism at length: against Tiedemann, he traces its inception back to Scotus Eriugena; this idea had also been held by Buhle, who subdivided Scholasticism again into the three traditional periods, however.<sup>58</sup>

For Tennemann, who places more importance on the theory of knowing and the conflict between realism and nominalism – with Roscelin, William of Champeaux, and Abelard (VIII/1, pp. 154–204) – there are four periods: the first is dominated by “blind realism”; the second, from Roscelin to Albert the Great, is dominated by the conflict between realism and nominalism; the third, from Albert the Great to Duns Scotus, sees the triumph of realism, especially with Aquinas and Duns Scotus; and the fourth, from Ockham to Raymond Sabunde, sees the revival of the conflict between realism and nominalism and the victory of the latter (VIII/1, pp. 33–40). Tennemann views the conflict between realism and nominalism as a phase in the

<sup>58</sup> On the subdivision of Scholasticism into periods within the Protestant historiographical tradition, cf. *Models*, I, pp. 56–57 (Peucer) and pp. 400–403 (Tribbechow); II, pp. 517–518 (Brucker).

conflict between dogmatism and scepticism. The age of Scholasticism ends with the propagation of mystical currents, such as the “mystical theology” of Jean Gerson and the “theology of nature” of Raymond of Sabunde (VIII/2, pp. 953–986), which gave expression to the “expectation and wish for a spiritual nourishment of a better quality than that which could be provided by the empty formulas” of nominalist Scholasticism (*Grundriss*, p. 201; see also *Gesch.*, VIII/2, pp. 953–954).

#### 11.2.4.3.3 Modern Philosophy

In the sphere of philosophy, the passage from the Middle Ages to the modern age was determined by external causes. The need for a reform of knowledge had long been felt, “but Scholasticism was a Gothic building (*ein gothisches Gebäude*) made of several and varied constituents and held together not so much by its internal firmness as to various supports”, such as “Aristotle’s authority”, the “primacy of positive theology”, and the power of the “ecclesiastical institution interfering with every aspect of public and private life”. It could not fall apart suddenly: “the preservation of the whole ultimately rested on the faith in the infallibility (*Unfehlbarkeit*) of the Church and of Aristotle, which the human understanding at the service of the Church had intertwined in a rather artificial fashion” (*Gesch.*, IX, pp. 3–4).

The origins of the modern age are to be sought in a “revolution in the way of thinking”, which took place as a result of several concurrent causes. Tennemann repeats here in substance, frequently summarizing in form, the typical arguments put forward by Enlightenment historiography, from Brucker to Buhle (IX, pp. 12–48; see above, pp. 813–814). In northern Italy in particular, “a middle class (*Mittelstand*) had long since taken shape; free from the dependency relations imposed on peasants and not claiming the privileges of aristocracy, it sustained itself by its own free and industrious activity and did not have the prejudices of the nobility and clergy but appeared to be open to the greater freedom of ideas characterizing learned humanity” (IX, p. 18). In Tennemann’s view, those who anticipate the new interest in the classical world are Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio. The more proximate fundamental causes of the dissolution of Scholasticism were “the revival of ancient classical literature and the reformation of the Church” (IX, pp. 14–16). The study of classical literature provoked an awareness of the “unilateralism”, “lack of freedom of thought”, “state of submission in which culture had been placed up to that moment” (IX, pp. 27–28); the direct study of the texts allowed a comprehension of “the huge difference existing between the Aristotle of Scholastics and the authentic Aristotle”; and the renewed interest in mathematics “made Platonic philosophy, which was so deeply related to ancient science, into an object of careful study as well” (IX, pp. 30–31).

But all this would not have been enough to break the yoke of Scholasticism: “the authority [of the Scholastic Aristotle] had been shaken but not yet completely destroyed. It was sustained and backed up by the power of hierarchy, and until the latter remained intact and endowed with its integral weight [...] no freedom

could be achieved". The despotism with which the papacy and the monastic orders oppressed culture had already been attacked, but only with Luther was it definitely overthrown: "certainly, [Luther's] purpose was not the liberation of the human mind in its scientific activity, but the restoration of the pure Christianity of the origins [...]; and yet, that liberation ensued as a secondary consequence. For this reason Luther deserves to be remembered in the history of modern scientific culture" (IX, pp. 34–35). Occasionally, and especially in the early phase, his religious spirit induced him to formulate "hazardous judgements" with regard to philosophy; Melanchthon's position was more balanced, and he was responsible for the introduction of "pure" Aristotelianism into Protestant universities. The Reformation did not abolish Aristotle, therefore, but delivered a decisive blow to Scholastic philosophy: "Aristotelian philosophy was no longer professed in a variety of forms distorted by Scholasticism, but in its original form derived from the clear sources of Aristotle's writings and his commentators" (IX, pp. 38–40).

The Renaissance represents the moment of transition to modernity in philosophy. The immediate premise to modernity is the revival of ancient philosophy, whose cycle is reproduced within the short span of two centuries with the resurgence of the four ancient schools, and more particularly the Platonic and the Aristotelian, conflicting with each other and leading to the scepticism and mysticism of the late Renaissance: "the human mind, accustomed to being led on a lead, did not for the moment venture upon autonomous research and did not seek pure truth in itself, but continued its search within the great doctrinal construction of the Greek spirit, thanks to which its eyes had been opened, in order to quench its reawakened aspiration for truth; alternatively, it abandoned all hope of finding the original and pure source of truth in itself and started to look around for a higher supernatural source. This was still not a true reformation in philosophy, but only the first step in that direction" (IX, pp. 7–8).

#### *A. The rebirth of ancient philosophy and the origins of modernity*

The philosophy of the Renaissance, which represents the sixth period in the history of thought, is divided into two parts: the first is devoted to the revival of the ancient Greek schools, the second to the early attempts at creating original systems. The Aristotelians are judged much more positively than the Platonists: the Renaissance Aristotelians – "no longer theologians and monks, but doctors and laymen" – referred directly to the texts written by Aristotle himself and his non-Christian commentators, whether Greek or Arab; "the chief object of their reflection was nature, not theology; in general, they handled even the supersensible according to natural principles; free of prejudices, they considered some objects from viewpoints which were different from the perspective of metaphysicians and theologians; and by their naturalistic tendency of thought, they – perhaps involuntarily – fostered unbelief" (IX, pp. 62–63).

The philosopher that Tennemann discusses at greatest length is undoubtedly Pomponazzi, and, quoting at length from Pomponazzi's texts, he relates his doctrines of the soul, the contrast between divine predestination and human freedom, and miracles (IX, pp. 64–102). Pomponazzi "had an extraordinary predisposition

for original thought (*zum Selbstdenken*), which might have enabled him to make significant progress if he had not adopted Aristotelian philosophy as his stable point of reference, as the only true philosophy, or at least as the philosophy which comes closest to the truth". He was not, as many believed, an atheist, but he "nurtured a different idea of the usual religious concepts. He desired a purified intellectual religion (*Verstandesreligion*), and so he was compelled to reject a large part of the Catholic religious system, which he viewed as a human invention, priestly deception, and superstition" (IX, pp. 101–102). The other Aristotelians quoted by Tennemann are Alessandro Achillini and Antonio Zimara – mentioned for their participation in the debate on the soul which had been initiated by Pomponazzi – as well as Andrea Cesalpino and Cesare Cremonini. After a lengthy presentation of the lay Aristotelianism of the Italian Renaissance, Tennemann dwells briefly upon the developments of Aristotelianism in the Protestant universities of Germany, from Melancthon to Jakob Thomasius (IX, pp. 117–130).

Tennemann does not sympathize with humanistic and Renaissance Platonism: the philosophy contained in Plato's writings, "spiritually intense, but lacking a system" and thus not up to comparison with the Aristotelian system, "was again drawn up in the form given to it by the systematic, but visionary (*schwärmerische*), Alexandrians or the imaginative Jews". The first exponent of Neoplatonism is Cusanus, who "elaborated a theological system, mixing together the visionary ideas (*schwärmerische Ideen*) of Dionysius the Areopagite and some mathematical concepts" (IX, pp. 133–138). Only a few pages (IX, pp. 138–145) – if compared, for example, with the number of pages written by Buhle on this author – are devoted to Ficino: "it was not Plato's pure philosophy, as drawn from his writings, which aroused his enthusiasm, but a mixture of these writings with the fanatical visions (*Schwärmereien*) of the Alexandrians [...]. He accepted all the later fanatical visions of Plotinus's followers and believed they contained explanations of the divinity and its relationship to the world, which were to be placed close to the revealed truths of Christianity" (IX, p. 140). There are only a few mentions of the other Renaissance Neoplatonists: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who "connected Oriental philosophy and Kabbalah [to Neoplatonism]", and Giovanni Francesco, the latter's nephew, who "abandoned these sources of written communication and adhered more to God's immediate revelation", both biblical revelation and "the revelation which is constantly made known to individuals" (IX, pp. 101–102). Tennemann believes that Ficino, Giovanni Pico, and Giovanni Francesco Pico gave rise to three different tendencies of "Platonism" which developed in the modern age, namely, the Neoplatonic, the Kabbalistic, and the "mystical".

The second part of the volume on Renaissance philosophy is devoted to the first original thinkers of the modern age. The authors treated more extensively are Bernardino Telesio and especially Tommaso Campanella and Giordano Bruno (IX, pp. 280–290, 290–372, and 372–420). Tennemann presents the doctrines of the latter two in detail, adding long quotations, although for Bruno he mainly relies on Buhle. From a general perspective, these new philosophies are nothing other than attempts at overcoming the difficulties presented by the ancient systems through a "combination of several systems", or of elements of them, with a

prevalence of sensistic elements in Campanella and of rationalistic, Eleatic, and Neoplatonic elements in Bruno. The account of the philosophy of this period ends with the sceptic line, which, with Montaigne and Pierre Charron in particular, had accompanied the events of dogmatic philosophy throughout the sixteenth century (IX, pp. 443–487). In the *Grundriss*, where the need to organize the material systematically prevails over the concern for chronology, the treatment of other sceptic thinkers, or those considered as such, such as François de La Mothe le Vayer and Hieronymus Hirnhaym (*Grundriss*, pp. 240–242) comes earlier, whereas they are examined later on in the *Geschichte* (X, pp. 526–530). Hence, for this period too, Tennemann is concerned to organize the material according to the usual framework, with dogmatism in its two forms, the empiricist and the rationalistic, on one hand, and scepticism on the other.

#### B. *The great systems of the modern age: empiricism and rationalism*

As previously said, in the *Geschichte*, modern philosophy as such, that is to say the history of philosophy “from Bacon and Descartes to Kant”, represents the seventh period in the entire course of the history of philosophy, whereas in the *Grundriss* it represents the second moment of modern philosophy. The *Geschichte* was not brought to completion by Tennemann, who was only able to publish volumes X and XI. In order to form a complete picture of Tennemann’s historiographical theories, therefore, we shall have to refer for the missing parts to the *Grundriss* (here cited from the first edition, unless otherwise stated). The fundamental features of the philosophy of this period are autonomy, originality, and systematism: “A new and highly interesting period begins for the progress of philosophy. Several thinkers endowed with great talent and culture, but adopting different ideas and viewpoints as their basis, made philosophy as a science into the object of their thinking efforts. There arose inquiries and systems which, by virtue of the originality of their robust and keen discernment, of their starting point and purpose, and even of the path leading to them, managed to make extraordinary imprint [. . .]. Philosophical sciences were enlarged and increased their systematic unity [. . .]. The interest in philosophy and its influence was extended, and with its principles philosophy became the universal link (*das allgemeine Band*) making all human sciences into a whole” (*Gesch.*, X, pp. 2–3).

Yet, it was not a period marked by peace and accord, but by vigorous and bitter conflicts: “the age of spiritual despotism and blind power was over. Every new expression to emerge was subjected to rigorous analysis. As soon as a new system became known, there immediately arose severe criticism; or criticism arose when a system, enjoying unusual fortune, met with favourable judgements too rapidly. The same fervent enthusiasm for truth which gave rise to polemic increasingly engendered scepticism as well, because it strived against the illusion of apparent knowledge, just as dogmatism strived for the possession of truth”. From this point of view, the purview of philosophy seems to acquire a more distinct and well-defined outline and can be more easily placed within the ordinary frameworks: “even though, at times, passions and emotions invaded the conflict between dogmatics and sceptics, in this period reason arose to engage in sufficient polemic to



sustain the progress of science, which involved examining arguments only, testing the resistance of principles as well as the consequentiality and thoroughness of deductions. The reactions showed by the two parts forced reason to perform more effective and penetrating research" (X, p. 3).

The opposition between empiricism and rationalism is applied with schematic rigidity to the whole period: "*empiricism and rationalism* are the two systems which aroused greater interest, in the hope of fulfilling expectations founded on reason. Empiricism was privileged by Bacon's genius and vigorous spirit [...]. The other direction, that of rationalism, begins with Descartes and develops concurrently in several forms [...]. Both currents clearly manifest a higher aspiration to provide knowledge with a solid foundation and unify its diverse elements into a system [...]. The idea of science and the representation of its requirements and conditions is more intensely developed; for this reason the search for the sources of our knowledge receives greater interest, and therefore there is an effort to impart greater perfection to the method of philosophizing" (X, pp. 3–4). The systematic perfection attained by philosophy in this period encourages Tennemann to present the history of speculative philosophy separately from that of practical philosophy: these two histories develop intertwined with each other, but "their conditions are different, and each of the two goes through its particular process of evolution, which can be set out in its proper light only if it is distinct from the other" (X, pp. 5–6). This criterion of division, already adopted in the *Grundriss* of 1812, is preserved in spite of the criticisms it had engendered; only in the 1825 edition of the manual, was Wendt to abandon it and merge the two parts together.

For Tennemann, the endpoint of the entire period – and of modernity in philosophy – is the Kantian revolution: "the lively interest produced by the systems which resulted from an intensified aspiration of reason had weakened with time, the conflicts emerging from different perspectives had slowly been neutralized by indifference, and in general the discontent caused by the little progress made by speculation and the distrust of reason had also paved the way for scepticism and empiricism; after all this, there appeared a thinker [Kant] endowed with a great spiritual power, who gave research a new direction, and in this way laid the foundations for an extraordinary revolution which initiated a new period" (X, p. 5).

(i) *The origins of empiricism: Bacon and Hobbes*

The first part of the tenth volume is devoted to the "history of the first school of empiricism" and is dominated by the figures of Bacon and Hobbes. As regards the former, special emphasis is laid on his unprecedented project of a universal renewal of knowledge, the *Instauratio magna* (*die große Umschaffung der Wissenschaften*); it was not completed, but the radicalism of the turning point represented by modernity is fully expressed in it. The account of Bacon's thought is only partial: Tennemann takes the framework of the systematic classification of sciences from the *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* and – adding only a few quotations from the *Novum Organum* – the concept of the "form" of things and the theory of induction (X, pp. 7–52). The other "empiricist" is Hobbes, whose thought is set out here in a more compact and systematic form, with lengthy quotations from

the *De corpore* in particular (X, pp. 53–111). The account of political thought should have been inserted in the history of practical philosophy, and indeed the *Grundriss* (pp. 307–308) deals with it rather extensively considering the fact that it is a handbook. Tennemann can see no relationship between Hobbes and Cartesian mechanism; a few references to Descartes appear in this biographical section. Unlike Bacon, Hobbes aims to reach the utmost certainty to which he sacrifices extension: “he restricted the field of philosophy to physics, rejecting metaphysics, which claims to move outside the world of senses. By restricting the field in this way, he hoped to provide philosophy with a degree of certainty that would allow it to equal mathematics”. Hobbes’s true limitation is empiricism: “from experience he derived principles, such as the principle of cause, without penetrating deeper into its foundation. By applying this, he obtained results which were in accordance with experience but could not be derived exclusively from perceptions with the mere help of the logical forms of thought, but presupposed metaphysical concepts which could not derive from this ground [ . . . ]. This philosophy, which claims to be physics and logic without metaphysics, in reality contradicts itself” (X, pp. 109–110).

In this section Tennemann also places Pierre Gassendi and Claude Guillet de Bérigard (X, pp. 141–173 and 174–183), whereas in the *Grundriss*, according to the traditional framework, they are counted among the restorers of the ancient systems. It is more surprising that this section, which is devoted to early empiricist philosophers, also includes Edward Herbert of Cherbury and Jakob Böhme. Tennemann devotes a substantial part of the section to Herbert (X, pp. 112–140): he does not recognize his Platonism and considers him as a sort of empiricist; “Hobbes sought the first element of all knowledge in external sense, Herbert in an instinct of reason (*Instinct der Vernunft*), to which sense (*Sinn*) and understanding (*Verstand*) are subordinated” (X, p. 112; see also pp. 138–140). Böhme’s presence in this volume, on the other hand, is due to an oversight (X, p. 183; but Hegel also places Bacon near Böhme, although by opposition: see Hegel<sup>1</sup>, III, p. 74); indeed, Böhme’s theosophical mysticism should have been placed near the account of the Kabbalistic philosophy of his English contemporary Robert Fludd, as was the case in the *Grundriss* (pp. 221–222).

(ii) *The origins of rationalism: from Descartes to Spinoza*

The second section of the tenth volume is devoted to the rationalistic philosophy of Descartes and his school. The authors examined here are numerous, but only three of them are the object of a lengthy exposition: besides Descartes, who gives the title to the section, Tennemann devotes a lengthy presentation and discussion to Malebranche and Spinoza. The account of Descartes’ thought is complete and systematic and draws on the second and third parts of the *Discourse*, the first *Meditation*, and the entire first part of the *Principia philosophiae* (X, pp. 199–286). The account is limited to metaphysics in a strict sense, and excludes physics and the physiology of passions – which, according to Tennemann, do not fall under the history of philosophy – as well as ethics, which has been “intentionally neglected” by Descartes (X, p. 263). The judgement on Descartes might surprise for its strongly negative tone; in reality, such an attitude was not unusual in the late

eighteenth century and, to give an example, it appears in Buhle as well (see above, pp. 816–817). Tennemann does not question Descartes' great merits in the fields of mathematics and physics (see for example X, pp. 200 and 216), but as regards philosophy he judges him to be more important for the debates he provoked than for the coherence of the system itself. "Descartes did not build a complete system of philosophy", as ethics and politics are missing, for example; "he has not justified it adequately, nor has he presented it in a thoroughly scientific form"; he has built "an edifice which is more imposing than enduring"; his manner of proceeding is dogmatic and is shaped *a priori*. "How philosophical knowledge is possible, on what it is grounded, how far it extends: all these directions of research have been ignored by him. He merely focused on thinking and hoped that through chiefly innate concepts – which was itself an unfounded hypothesis – he could deduce in reasoning all the remaining philosophical content of knowledge" (X, p. 265).

Tennemann insists in particular on the accusation of the "vicious circle" made against Descartes, which he also links to objections of a Kantian nature: "he makes all philosophical knowledge depend on the principle that 'all that which I can represent to myself in a clear and distinct way is true'". But the truth of this principle is itself derived from knowledge of the existence of God, knowledge, however, which has a logical meaning only on the condition that that principle is presupposed: "in general, when Descartes aims at enlarging knowledge, he totally mistakes thinking (*das Denken*) and knowing (*das Erkennen*), even though he bases himself precisely on this distinction when, as a sceptic, he presents all knowledge as doubtful, in order to find out a more certain foundation. For this reason, he was not able to recognize the error of his proof for the existence of God, even if it had been revealed" (X, p. 266).

Some passages selected from the *Objections* and *Answers* (by Hobbes, Arnauld, and Gassendi) and from the letters (Henry More) form an introduction to the debate on Cartesianism (X, pp. 267–285). Tennemann reviews the developments of Cartesianism in France, Holland, and Germany, "countries in which Cartesian philosophy has had a fundamental role", as well as in England and Italy, countries in which "it aroused more limited interest" (X, p. 285). Malebranche and Spinoza are also placed within the more general history of European Cartesianism. Tennemann provides a lengthy treatment of Malebranche (X, pp. 317–374), where, to describe his system, he follows *De la recherche de la vérité* which he quotes extensively from Lenfant's Latin translation. Malebranche joins Cartesian elements to other elements of Augustinian origin: he assumes "that the causal connection is a link which must be deductible analytically, like a logical connection. This mistake, the prejudice deriving from Descartes that sure knowledge is only founded on demonstrations, certain ideas by Augustine implying that immutable truths presuppose an immutable subject, which can be nothing other than God, and in general the theological system of his church, are the ingredients and foundations of the metaphysico-theological system erected by Malebranche" (X, pp. 366–367; regarding the Augustinian influence, see also p. 341).

The final part of the tenth volume is almost entirely devoted to Spinoza (X, pp. 374–495). The account of his system is fairly extensive but not complete: after a few

introductory pages on Spinoza's cultural education and on various events relating to his writings, Tennemann turns to the *Tractatus de emendatione intellectus* as a methodical introduction to the system; then he partly quotes (up to proposition 15) and partly summarizes book I of the *Ethics* (X, pp. 390–462); finally, he discusses the different and contradictory interpretations of Spinoza's system which were advanced both by the contemporaries of the Dutch philosopher and by thinkers active in more recent times, and here he refers not only to the *Pantheismusstreit*, but also to a number of studies which appeared in the early nineteenth century (X, pp. 463–495).

Spinoza's philosophy is nothing other than a "continuation and refinement of Cartesianism" (X, p. 374). In Descartes' method, Spinoza privileges the rule of synthesis, logical deduction of a geometric kind (see X, p. 391, where Tennemann refers to Lodewijk Meyer's *Introduction to the Principia philosophiae Cartesianae*). Moreover, from Descartes, Spinoza took the definition of substance and derived the consequence that there exists only one substance, which is God, who is, therefore, no longer the mere guarantee of truth, as Descartes had maintained, but is its starting point; and with this Spinoza brings to fulfilment the Cartesian rule of evidence (X, pp. 392–394). There is no doubt that the conception of God "not as a transcendent but as an immanent cause of all things" may also have been influenced by the Hebraic tradition, the Christianity of the origins, and by a few philosophies of the past (X, p. 389). Spinozism is not a form of atheism; the accusation of atheism, which has long accompanied it, has prevented a proper understanding of it (see X, pp. 463, and 482). Spinozism is the highest form of "rationalistic dogmatism": Spinoza "gives his deductions the greatest demonstrative power, which they only have, however, when one presupposes that which must be demonstrated through them [. . .]. Spinoza's intention was certainly not to provide a proof for the existence of God, which cannot be demonstrated, since God is because he is" (X, pp. 468–469). Nevertheless, Spinoza has also done a "service for reason", with his concept of "a metaphysics which could be valid as a science", to be fulfilled on the basis of pure concepts, excluding all that which is sensible and empirical, and with "the opposition between the theoretical and the practical interest of reason" (X, pp. 481–482).

(iii) *Rationalism, empiricism, and scepticism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: Locke, Leibniz, Hume*

The first part of the eleventh volume, the last volume of the *Geschichte* to be published (we are by now in 1819, the year of Tennemann's death), is divided into two extensive sections, devoted to Locke's empiricism and Leibniz's rationalism, respectively (XI, pp. 6–75 and 83–205). This first part ends with an extended presentation of the scepticism of Pierre-Daniel Huet and above all Pierre Bayle (XI, pp. 245–279). The second part, which should have dealt with the developments of the "schools of rationalism and empiricism" up to the Kantian turning point, limits itself to describing the weave of rationalism, empiricism, and scepticism in France and England in the eighteenth century (XI, pp. 280–519).

The treatment always remains within the boundaries of philosophy, hinting very rarely at the external events of the century, and rigidly adhering to the usual

framework. Cartesian rationalism “had sought the foundation of knowledge in thought, and its purpose was to build a system of the supersensible which did not allow presuppositions but, on the contrary, demonstrated everything”. Spinoza developed “this system with extreme rigour, not generally presupposing innate ideas, but only one idea [...] which contains in itself the whole of being and knowledge with total thoroughness and from which everything can be derived – by rigorous deduction – with apodictic certainty”. The share of truth in this conception resided in recognizing that there exist truths arising from pure reason and that reason finds the ultimate foundation of knowledge in itself; yet since its foundation is merely hypothetical, and since it is “a knowledge reason has of itself only in half measure and unilaterally”, it inevitably led “to the extreme opposite”, namely, the conception “that there is no pure knowledge and that reason in itself can find nothing true but rather receives all data of knowledge from the senses and defines their form only by virtue of reflection” (XI, pp. 1–2). The latter was to become Locke’s position, which was opposed by Leibniz.

The great cycle of ancient philosophy reappears here in outline: “what had happened in the age of Plato and Aristotle now happened again, although in a different manner”, namely, critically founded: “the empirical origin of human knowledge was not only admitted hypothetically nor simply stated, but was deduced from principles; furthermore, since in the same period another thinker appeared [Leibniz] who defended the rational side of knowledge with deep discernment and objected to the empiricist view, all this succeeded in keeping alive a spirit of research which gradually shed light on all fundamental issues of philosophy, one by one, and finally brought about more important and stable consequences than those produced in the past by the opposition between Plato’s and Aristotle’s philosophy”. Reason could arise “thanks to this research – which the French and English scholars began and the Germans resumed and continued with greater profundity – and thanks to a knowledge of itself which was purer and more complete [...]. This result was to become more clearly evident in the following period, but the research and efforts deployed towards this end had by now begun” (XI, pp. 1–2).

But this period was also permeated by sceptical movements, by opinions which subject tradition to criticism and, in addition, bring about a powerful struggle for freedom. Rationalism of Cartesian origin had slowly led to the theory of the primacy of reason in all fields, including the religious: “that reason might have the last word in the field of religious science (*Religionswissenschaft*) [...] was a demand asserted extremely openly, even though it was often disputed, and in part could be justly disputed, when the Cartesian school wanted its hypotheses to be accepted in the field of positive theology as principles of reason”. Those who objected to the claims of free thought were the theologians, in Catholic countries above all, “where a hierarchy still existed, but also in those countries where the spirit of Protestantism predominated only formally”. Yet, in general, what prevailed was reason: in the absence of a “definition, derived from principles, of the limits of human knowledge – research whose importance was partially recognized and which had remote origins – the contrast between theology and philosophy served to keep thought active and to build a temporary barrier against the dissoluteness of speculation” (XI, pp. 3–4).

These features also appear in the different forms of scepticism which develop throughout this period. In general, sceptics concerned themselves with pointing out “the weakness of reason by means of the contradictions and controversies of philosophers and the revelation of difficulties regarding those objects which most concern reason, such as all religious truths, in the first place existence, nature, the attributes of God, the immortality of the soul, the freedom of will, and the possibility of reconciling the evil in the world with God’s wisdom and goodness”. The sceptics of this period, while admitting some truths, attribute them with “a purely negative value, intended to identify what is false, and they maintain reason’s incapability of reaching a knowledge of the truth positively, and therefore point to revelation”. From this perspective, they still remain “to a great extent within the spirit of the ancient sceptics”; only later “did there develop, resting on the viewpoint of empiricism” a peculiar and new form of scepticism, that of Hume, “which was to condemn all speculation to death” (XI, pp. 4–5).

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Locke and Leibniz are the two great contrasting figures. Locke’s thought is presented by describing, in the following order, the critique of innatism, the doctrine of ideas, the theory of knowledge and its degrees, namely the contents of books I, II, IV of the *Essay*, from which Tennemann quotes several extended passages (which, surprisingly, are drawn from Coste’s translation and not from the German translation edited 2 years before by Tennemann himself). Locke’s philosophy is judged very favourably, and the criticisms raised are those one would expect from a Kantian. Locke’s empiricism is not “a pure and simple repetition of the ancient edifice of peripatetic philosophy [...]”, but is rather an apparent demonstration (*scheinbarer Beweis*) of it”. Locke’s interest in the problem of the limits of human knowledge, his favourable assessment of the analytical process, his criticism of the improper use made of the so-called principles of Scholastic philosophy: “all these were new ideas, which might encourage further research”. But Locke’s research into the limits and foundations of knowledge “taken in itself was still very incomplete and inadequate. Indeed, research was only focused on the material conditions of knowledge, in so far as these are given by external and internal sense, in relation to which the human mind remains passive while perceiving”. Locke’s solution is “unilateral” (*einseitige Ansicht*), since he should at least have admitted “the possibility that even autonomous activity of the human mind might contain material for representations”, instead of excluding it *a priori*. Finally, Locke’s empiricism must be considered to be responsible to some extent for certain materialistic and atheistic developments which took place and became “visible especially in France”: “if empiricism were pursued coherently, then no philosophy, no metaphysics, no moral doctrine would be possible in reality, and their most important objects would be numbered among the chimeras” (XI, pp. 71–74). In support of this thesis, a passage from Diderot is quoted in a footnote.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup>Reference to Diderot’s entry ‘Locke’, in *Encyclopédie méthodique: Philosophie ancienne et moderne* (Paris, 1791–1794), vol. I, p. 129: “[...] De là une grande règle en philosophie, c’est

Leibniz has several and outstanding merits thanks to his manifold contribution to both mathematics and philosophy. There is no doubt that “his system has had the same fate as all systems; nevertheless, from Leibniz onwards a new life has begun and he contributed greatly to leading the human mind, through self-knowledge, in the right direction towards science. After him, a new development of philosophical culture began in Germany: more particularly, he brought about a turning point in the philosophical spirit of the Germans” (XI, pp. 91–92). Leibniz’s culture is varied and embraces all fields of knowledge; moreover, he has a deep knowledge of ancient and medieval as well as modern philosophy; this is one of the reasons why he envisages the project of reconciling Aristotle and the moderns (XI, pp. 91–99). We have no system laid down by Leibniz (XI, pp. 99 and 198–201), but we can form an idea of what Leibniz had in mind on the basis of the fragment *Characteristica universalis*, which was published in 1765 together with the *New Essays*, which is summarized by Tennemann (XI, pp. 104–109). Leibniz’s thought is explained using passages from the *New Essays*, as concerns the comparison with Locke (XI, pp. 125–135), from the *Monadology* (in its 1728 Latin translation), as concerns metaphysics (XI, pp. 117–121 and 125–163), from the *Theodicy*, and from the correspondence with Clarke, in relation to the well-known dispute (XI, pp. 163–189 and 190–198), which concludes the narrative part. The critical observations are all rooted in Tennemann’s Kantianism: Leibniz founded metaphysics merely on logical principles, and was presumptuous enough to believe he could know the essence of things by means of the understanding; he did not distinguish appropriately between understanding and sensibility; he “intellectualized” phenomena and ignored the weight of intuition in knowledge, and so on.

The history of philosophy after Locke and Leibniz is the history of the developments of the two major directions of empiricism and rationalism. Empiricism ensured “the enlargement of knowledge by virtue of observation, induction, and analogy, while encouraging modesty and an awareness of the limits of knowledge [...]. The flaw lay in the absence of a scientific form and in the restriction of knowledge to nature alone, rejecting the rational and the supersensible”: in some circumstances, this path could lead to materialism and scepticism. Rationalism in itself was more in accordance with the interest of science, but “the rational element of knowledge, on which it rested, was presupposed rather than deduced, and relied to a greater extent on the power of logic in order to build a system of knowledge by means of deductions from presuppositions”. In this case, the danger consisted of the excessive confidence of reason in its own processes. In empiricism and rationalism there existed, therefore, a mixture of truth and error which led to constant revisions and changes, in order to “introduce an order, judged to be universally valid, into philosophical questions, according to Locke or Leibniz’s points of view”. The countries actively participating in this revision process, each according to the particular features of its “national character”, are France and England, “from where

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que toute expression qui ne trouve pas hors de notre esprit un *objet sensible* auquel elle puisse se rattacher, *est vide de sens*”. On the *Encyclopédie méthodique* see above, Ch.1.4).

the two major directions of dogmatic spirit, empiricism and rationalism, originated", and Germany, which "had always performed a secondary and subordinate role [...], whereas now it not only entered the scene with an independent and original spirit, but was even brought to the foreground" (XI, pp. 282–283).

In France the "national character" exerted a "detrimental influence on philosophy" which was reduced to "logic"; "physical nature" became an endpoint and was seen as the only reality; "the supersensible, morality, freedom, immortality, and the existence of God were either simply denied or were made a semblance of being, in true idolatry of nature. Metaphysics was derided [...] and at last totally excluded from the scope of philosophy. An aspiration, praiseworthy in itself, to break the chains of hierarchical despotism and become free of superstition gave philosophers, affected as they were by specific national characteristics, the tendency to an irreligious way of thinking and to a lack of constraint in the moral sphere" (XI, p. 284). Among the French philosophers of the eighteenth century, Tennemann examines Condillac (XI, pp. 289–302), Bonnet (XI, pp. 302–312), the Encyclopaedists, in particular Diderot (XI, pp. 313–318), and the *Système de la nature* by baron d'Holbach (XI, pp. 318–351), which Tennemann still insists (we are now in 1819!) on ascribing to Mirabaud, and La Mettrie (XI, pp. 351–359). As regards Condillac's sensism, Tennemann's judgement is negative; his sensism brings about results which are opposed to those desired by the author: "by this endeavour, instead of promoting metaphysics, Condillac has rather fully destroyed it" (XI, p. 289). Tennemann hardly mentions the deistic and anti-materialistic Enlightenment of Voltaire, Maupertuis, and Montesquieu (XI, p. 360), and does not touch on Rousseau at all. As for the French Enlightenment, like Buhle (see above, p. 821) albeit more rigidly, Tennemann seems to be only interested in the materialistic and atheistic orientation, which he condemns but, at the same time, considers to be the original contribution provided by France in that age.

In England, Locke's empiricism "went through similar developments, although with the important difference [...] that the idea of the supersensible was not immediately thrown overboard like a useless burden of humanity, but attempts were made to preserve it, like something of highest value, and associate it in various ways with empiricism". Tennemann explains the difference between French and English empiricism by pointing at the "national character" of English authors: "thinkers proved here to possess more earnestness and dignity, and applied themselves to persuading with their profundity (*Gründlichkeit*) rather than to seducing with their wit (*Witz*), flashes of genius (*Einfälle*), and exterior form" (XI, pp. 361–362). The account of English thought is complete, accurate, and develops along well-defined guidelines: from the great debates concerning deism and necessitarianism (XI, pp. 367–398), which dominated English philosophical culture throughout the century, to the "idealistic" developments of Lockean empiricism with Arthur Collier and Berkeley (XI, pp. 399–404 and 404–416), to Hume's scepticism (XI, pp. 416–468), and the twofold anti-sceptic and anti-idealistic reaction characterizing the school of 'common sense' and Priestley's materialism, which derived from Hartley's sensism (XI, pp. 468–486 and 486–516).



The figure of Hume is at the centre of debate in this period. Tennemann presents Hume's "theoretical philosophy" thoroughly and concisely, deriving it from Hume's first *Enquiry*, which he had translated in 1793, and from the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. In any case, the overall frame of reference is provided by the Kantian interpretation. Like Berkeley, Hume grounded his philosophical research on the principles of Locke's philosophy "but, since he was an original thinker [...], he followed his own route, trying to investigate the consequences of those principles with reference to the objectivity of our convictions as well as the certainty of our knowledge of the world, the soul, and God [...]. The outcome of his research was negative: there exists no objective knowledge [...]. Consequently, his mind and the contents of his philosophical research are sceptical. On this point, he was preceded by Berkeley", whose "idealism equally derived from the principles of Locke's philosophy, but contains not only the negation of the outer world, but also the dogmatic pursuit of an explanation for our representations drawn from divine ideas"; Hume recognized that Berkeley's idealism "cannot be confuted, but cannot convince either, thus leading to scepticism; in accordance with his sedate and moderate way of thinking, he therefore kept himself within the boundaries of the latter" (XI, pp. 427–428).

However, Hume's scepticism concerns only speculative philosophy: "with respect to mathematics, the objects of art, taste, morals, and politics, he is fairly dogmatic. He admits demonstrations only as concerns concepts (Tennemann translates "*idea*" as "*Begriff*") and their relations, and limits the understanding to the field of experience. But aesthetic and morals do not concern the understanding at all: indeed, within their sphere, the understanding makes decisions not on the basis of concepts but of feelings and perceptions" (XI, pp. 428–429). The account of Hume's ethics is deferred until the subsequent section, which was never written, however, where Tennemann should have presented the history of practical philosophy from Descartes to Kant. But, as regards ethics, the *Grundriss* mentions nothing more than Hume's name within the short paragraph devoted to Hutcheson's ethics (*Grundriss*, p. 311).

Locke had dealt with the "origin and materials of knowledge" but he had not penetrated the surface of the problem of the "link" between representations in a piece of knowledge. Hume accepts Locke's theory without developing it further, "but penetrates deeper into the formal element of knowledge (*das Formale der Erkenntnis*), and develops with greater discernment and rigour the consequences which derive from the doctrine of the empirical origin of representations. He was chiefly interested in the concepts of connection and necessity, yet not so much of concepts as of objects, which constitute such an important element in our knowledge". Tennemann stresses the "coherence" (*Folgerichtigkeit*) of Hume's research, and yet he asks why Hume, precisely "thanks to the result of his philosophy" did not follow the right path, namely that of criticism. The result attained by Hume is a "universal scepticism" which, as he himself concedes, "appears to be in contradiction with the being and the life of man [...], since it is incessantly nullified by experience, where every sceptical argument is surpassed by a belief, a 'natural instinct', or a certain necessity in thought". So, why, "owing to the contradiction between the final result of his sceptical research and that *natural instinct* and

necessity, was Hume not led to doubt the starting point and development of the research as well as its principle [...], why did he not dive a little deeper into the internal economy of the human mind [...], and why, more particularly, after rightly observing a necessity of thought, did he not investigate further, but interrupted all further research with the *qualitas occulta* of a natural instinct?”. For Tennemann, the only possible answer is in the individual personality (*Eigentümlichkeit*) of Hume himself, who was “more acute than profound”: for this reason, Hume “stopped on the edge (*auf dem Grenzpunkte*) of scepticism”; but this was enough to earn him great merit for philosophy as a science. His research was to induce other thinkers to form the conviction “that empiricism cannot be the true system of philosophy, and other elements and foundations of knowledge are to be provided” (XI, pp. 464–467).

Owing to the author’s death, the *Geschichte* stops abruptly with the eleventh volume and the treatment of eighteenth-century English philosophy. The seventh period, as concerns the part relating to theoretical philosophy, should have ended with an account of eighteenth-century German philosophy and with the second *Abteilung* containing the period, which was devoted to the history of practical philosophy from Bacon and Descartes to Kant. This was to be followed by the eighth and last period, corresponding to the history of Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy. As regards this part in its entirety, we have to refer to the few pages of the *Grundriss*. Eighteenth-century German philosophy carries on the tradition of Leibnizian rationalism and is dominated by the figure of Wolff, whose system is in a great measure taken from Leibniz, “except for the perceptive faculty of monads and the pre-established harmony, which he considered to be a mere hypothesis”, even though, on the other hand, he filled “many of its gaps”. His greatest merit consists in the unity and systematic connection he gave to the whole “thanks to the mathematical method, which he considered to be nothing other than a perfect application of logical laws”. His mistakes were the same as those of Leibniz’s rationalism: “thought was his only starting point [...], he considered philosophy to be the science of possible as possible, made the principle of non-contradiction the supreme principle of all knowledge, placed concepts and definitions at the peak of the sciences, failing to see their real meaning [...], passed over the distinction between mathematics and philosophy as to form and matter”, and so on, repeating the usual criticisms of a Kantian origin (*Grundriss*, pp. 287–288). The Wolffian system long dominated in Germany; among its opponents were only the Pietistic-oriented theologians – “scholars endowed with a limited philosophical spirit”, such as Lange, Buddeus, Walch – and only two outstanding philosophical figures, Andreas Rüdiger and Christian August Crusius, who are placed near Joachim Georg Darjes (pp. 289–292). Apart from the names just mentioned, in the *Grundriss* all German philosophers are classified as Wolffian, even those who, like Ploucquet and Lambert, had adopted original positions, and even the *Popularphilosophen* who were active in the second half of the century, like Mendelssohn and Eberhard (pp. 294–295).

Eighteenth-century Italian philosophy is totally omitted by Tennemann: “in Italy, due to a lack of intellectual freedom (*Geistesfreiheit*), philosophy could not develop” (*Gesch.*, XI, p. 286). In Italy, philosophy seems to come to an end with Bruno and

Campanella; Tennemann hardly mentions Galileo, and the last Italian he briefly considers is Michelangelo Fardella, whom he considers a follower of Malebranche's "idealism" (X, p. 302).

The *Grundriss* devotes little space to the history of "practical philosophy" in the modern age (*Grundriss*, pp. 304–319). In the modern age, "interest was primarily directed towards speculation" (p. 304). The first part deals with the political thought elaborated by Grotius, Hobbes, Pufendorf, and Christian Thomasius; the second part deals with ethics, in which Tennemann identifies two major directions, that of "moral sentiment" – with Lord Shaftesbury, Francis Hutcheson, Hume, then Adam Ferguson, and Lord Kames – and the Wolffian direction which, by contrast, rests upon the concept of the "perfection" of nature (pp. 305–309 and 310–316); and Crusius who opposed the primacy of natural law with the primacy of God's will (p. 317). The field of practical philosophy – and Tennemann concludes here with a statement of clear Kantian origin – also showed "a contradictory inclination between empiricism and rationalism [...]. The demands of reason were never totally rejected, and yet they were seldom perceived in a pure, straightforward way, because reason was almost always considered to be nothing other than a tool of reflection or the servant of sensibility, and not an autonomous practical power" (p. 319).

### C. *The Kantian revolution and its developments in Germany: idealism, realism, scepticism*

Kant's philosophy marks a radical change in the history of thought and inaugurates a new epoch, dominated by the "critical spirit in philosophizing". In the *Grundriss*, Kant's philosophy is obviously presented rather schematically, but nevertheless thoroughly (*Grundriss*, pp. 321–329). Hume's scepticism, reflection on the different fate of reason in mathematics and in philosophy, the analysis of the variety of systems produced in the course of history: all this induced Kant to address the question of the critique of reason. Tennemann's account proceeds by summarizing the three *Critiques* in a few pages and makes no mention of the pre-critical writings (pp. 322–326). But the critique of the cognitive power is only a propaedeutic to the system: Kant "completed some parts of the system", observes Tennemann, who only refers to the works on the metaphysics of nature, on the metaphysics of morals, and on religion, however. Critical philosophy "exalts the human mind, but at the same time, by establishing a measure (*Ausmessung*) of its faculty, confines it within bounds [...], moderates the unrestrained will to demonstrate all things [...], prevents mysticism, rejects scepticism, and justifies and circumscribes the ambits of science and faith. It is the key to the understanding of diversely contrasting systems; it teaches man to discriminate and recognize in all of them their foundation, their tendency, what is defective and partial, as well as what is true and appropriate"; critical philosophy does not bring philosophical research to an end, but keeps its spirit constantly alive, while in addition allowing it to move according to a plan; philosophy "discovers the architectural plan of its system in reason [...]. It does not destroy any truthful human idea or conviction but, thanks to the critical standpoint, merely situates them at the right place and in proper sequence" (pp. 328–329).

In the *Grundriss*, the developments of philosophy after Kant are arranged according to a precise framework. The novelty of critical philosophy, also ensuing from the “inevitable misunderstandings” which arose, provoked immediate reactions: “most German philosophers took up a position against the new philosophy”; some of them regarded it as something old which was put forward under the guise of novelty, others saw it as something really new, but also “dangerous and detrimental”, a form of “idealism destroying the objective reality of knowledge and the rational beliefs in the existence of God and immortality, thus damaging the sanctuary of humanity”. The first opponents are presented according to this framework, which is accompanied by a lengthy bibliographical note, and they are subdivided into genuine opponents (like Mendelssohn, Eberhard, Feder, Jacobi, and many others) and restless fanatics, like Benedikt Stattler (pp. 329–331). This is followed by a long paragraph – accompanied by a very lengthy bibliography – devoted to Kant’s commentators and early supporters, who are subdivided into those who contributed to the system in general and those who contributed to separate parts of it (pp. 332–337).

However, Tennemann admits, some of the difficulties raised against critical philosophy were real: “some regarded it as conflicting with sound human understanding because it was idealism, others thought that it stopped halfway, since it threw the thing in itself out of the door but let it back in through the window”; the accusation of dualism was also rested on some foundation, because critical philosophy did not deduce its principles “from a supreme principle”. It was therefore critical philosophy itself which engendered the revival of the ancient dogmatic systems both in an attempt to “elevate critical philosophy itself to a system of absolute knowledge [...] – with respect to which Kant merely indicated the way and laid the foundation – and to reach the highest degree of knowledge in the absolute, in which being and knowing are identical and all contrasts involved in reflection are removed. Thus, little by little, the critical spirit in philosophizing became dogmatic again”; the Kantian system gave rise to other systems, and even “scepticism regained strength, all the more so as the aspiration to an apodictic knowledge gradually constituted the fundamental character of the new philosophy. The critical school therefore gave birth to new dogmatic and sceptical research” (pp. 337–338). This general scheme provides the framework for the development of post-Kantian philosophy, which obviously concerns German philosophy only up to 1812.

The first author to be examined is Reinhold who, as Tennemann observes, “set the tone” of the course followed by the debate. Here reference is made essentially to the *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des Menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens* (*Essay on a New Theory of the Human Capacity for Representation*). The notion of representation – and the “principle of consciousness” it relates to – is the unitary principle from which “to deduce unity and multiplicity”, that is, matter and form, passivity and activity, of knowledge. Thus “with the theory of the faculty of representation, critical philosophy appeared to gain a systematic unity and connection”; but it was only “a glittering illusion” (*ein blendender Schein*). Reinhold’s position was attacked by Schulze-Aenesidemus; “after several attempts at rebuilding his system, the author himself abandoned it and moved on first to Fichte, then to Bardili” (pp. 339–340).

Tennemann therefore passes a critical judgement on Reinhold, the author who, two decades earlier, had introduced him to the study of Kant; but he also acknowledges his historical role.

Beck intended to be the interpreter of the Kantian system: he identified the “critical standpoint”, from which the system should be judged, in the “original activity of representation”; but, “bringing everything back to the unity of the understanding (*Verstand*) and maintaining that, with the concept of size, the understanding produces space and time, he removed a clear distinction between intuition and thought and prepared transcendent idealism” (pp. 340–341).

Much more space is devoted to Fichte who, as Tennemann recognizes, showed he possessed “genius, great discernment, and remarkable intellectual energy”. Fichte intended to eliminate the essential core of Schulze and Maimon’s scepticism and, “awoken by the example of the theory of the faculty of representation [i.e. by Reinhold] [. . .], he tried to build a system which, starting from a single principle, could explain the matter and form of all knowledge, thus restoring the unity missing in the critical system”. Unlike Kant, Fichte does not start from an analysis of faculties, nor, unlike Reinhold, from the original fact of consciousness, but from the original *activity* of the subject. Here Tennemann summarizes into a mere two pages – but let us remember that this is the *Grundriss* – the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794. This account is then followed by a judgement of total dissent: “this system certainly contains the utmost in unity and removes many difficulties, but it gives rise to other difficulties. [. . .] It does not explain why the Ego or pure self should be contrasted with a non-Ego; it does not explain how this may become an impulse (*Anstoß*) to absolute activity, nor how from simple representations there may arise the semblance (*Schein*) of objective reality”. The doctrine of science is in fact a formal system which presupposes reality, rather than justifying it (pp. 341–343).

In the subsequent paragraph, Tennemann briefly deals with Fichte’s writings on natural rights and morals, dating from 1796 and 1798 respectively, and dwells particularly on the Fichtean concept of “God as moral order of the world”, and not as substance, which had brought upon him the accusation – undeserved, in Tennemann’s view – of atheism. The treatment ends with a paragraph on the changes in the account of the doctrine of science after 1800: Fichte no longer explains it “by means of the laws of thought”, namely with the theory of the three fundamental principles, but “by means of an intellectual intuition”, shifting – observes Tennemann – from an “idealistic” to a “realistic” position. He concludes: “this change seems to have been affected both by Schelling’s philosophy and by Fichte’s religious inner attitude” (pp. 343–345).

According to Tennemann, the re-formulations of Fichte’s doctrine already hint at Schelling’s philosophy of identity, which he presents by referring, as far as we can see, to the *Darstellung meines Systems* of 1801 and the *Bruno* of 1802 in particular, but also to other writings by Schelling, as well as Hegel’s well-known *Differenzschrift* of 1801. But soon, observes Tennemann, Schelling clearly perceived the “unilateralism” of the doctrine of science: “that the subjective, the self, produces the objective, and that the reverse is not possible: this was admitted with no proof. A *transcendental philosophy* and a *philosophy of nature* can both

be envisaged. The former starts from the self, and deduces the objective, the many, the necessary, and nature from it; the latter starts from nature, and deduces the self, freedom, and the simple from it". Both viewpoints are necessary and legitimate, but insufficient: "both are lost in infinity, something common to both of them". Their parallelism indicates a point which can explain it: "a higher philosophy still has to be provided, a philosophy from which they both emerge as sisters". This is "the system of the *absolute identity of identity and non-identity*, or the indifference of the different, in which the essence of the absolute (or God) consists" (pp. 347–348; in reality, this expression is used by Hegel in the *Differenzschrift* and already contains a critical interpretation of Schelling's position, but in 1812 Tennemann still regarded Hegel as a dissident Schellingian: see *Grundriss*, pp. 350–351). The Absolute, i.e. God, is known (according to Schelling) by means of the absolute reason, which is "total indifference of the subjective and the objective [...], and does not think but knows by intuition (*intellectual intuition*)" (p. 348).

Tennemann also introduces here the theme of the derivation of the many from undifferentiated unity, in which he perceives the difficulty of the philosophy of identity to consist: "the Absolute is indistinctness of absolute being and absolute knowing, in which all objects (subject and object, knowledge and nature, the ideal and the real) are annulled, but from which all oppositions result, as poles or sides of the absolute, although sometimes the ideal, albeit with the prevalence at times of the ideal, at times of the real, either by *division* of the Absolute, or by its *self-disclosure*, or by *detachment of ideas* from God [...]. All that which is, is the same absolute being, just as it manifests itself exactly in this form [...]. All is in unity, and unity is all. All is identical: there is no *qualitative* but only a *quantitative* difference in things" (p. 348).

Schelling's philosophy "has skilfully used the ideas of the ancients, of Plato, Bruno, and Spinoza"; its success is due to the fact that it "dominates the whole field of theoretical knowledge" and "its principles remain valid in all sciences". Tennemann does not fail to hint at the influence exerted by Schelling in the scientific field as well: "philosophers, theologians, jurists, physicians [...] applied themselves to reshaping all sciences according to the viewpoint of the philosophy of identity". Still, his overall judgement is negative: "[...] it is nothing other than poetry of the human mind, whose dazzling power comes from the apparent ease with which it explains everything and its *a priori* construction of nature" (pp. 349–350). The school of Schelling gave rise to diverging lines of thought, and here Tennemann names Wagner, Eschenmayer, and Hegel (whose *Phenomenology* he cites in the bibliography): authors who around 1803 had engaged in polemics with Schelling on the question of the undifferentiated unity, although from different perspectives. Tennemann does not expand on the developments of idealism after Schelling; he writes and gathers notes which, however, he only partially used for the 1816 edition; this manuscript material was to be employed by Wendt for the later editions of the textbook.

For Tennemann, the systems laid down by Friedrich Bouterwek and Christoph Gottfried Bardili represent the realistic trend of post-Kantianism, expressing itself

as united either with empiricist demands (in the former) or with logicist and rationalistic demands (in the latter). In this way, they were a reaction to Schulze and Maimon's post-Kantian scepticism, but their position is judged to be insufficient. The two last authors examined are Jacobi and Schulze, who provide continuity with the sceptic moment of post-Kantian philosophy. Still, as for Jacobi's philosophy of faith (where "faith" – observes Tennemann – in the writings following the *Briefe* also means an immediate certainty "in which reason remains fully passive"), Tennemann formulates a critical judgement: "the principle of this philosophy – faith and revelation – remains in obscurity, but seems to end up as an appeal to sound human understanding and as a mysticism conflicting with the interest of theoretical and practical reason, since it opens up the way to superstition (*Aberglaube*) and visionary enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*)" (pp. 352–357). More positive is his judgement on Schulze, the renowned author of *Aenesidemus*. Among the works by Schulze Tennemann considers here is the *Kritik der theoretischen Philosophie*, written in 1801, which occasioned Hegel's essay on scepticism in the *Kritisches Journal* of 1802. He is imbued, writes Tennemann, with the "intention, worthy of a philosopher [...], to promote – just like Kant, although to an even greater extent – reason's self-consciousness by disclosing the inherited mistake of all philosophy". The scepticism attained by Schulze merely concerns theoretical philosophy and "does not affect the certainty of immediate knowledge"; certainly, Schulze's scepticism is in many respects disputable, but it is "original" and "praiseworthy, partly because it prolongs the interest in unceasing research, partly because it distracts the human mind from the wanderings of speculation" (pp. 357–359).

In the 1812 edition of the *Grundriss*, the conclusion is very short, as one would expect in a textbook, and we cannot guess what the content of a conclusive assessment in the *Geschichte* would have been, if it had been completed. In the *Grundriss*, the conclusion, which remains unchanged in all editions, adopts a moderate tone, while displaying a somehow mannered confidence: "the critical system itself, by measuring and defining the bounds of the cognitive power, has failed to stop the audacious flight of the spirit of speculation or to hinder the assaults of scepticism, but rather it has enabled them to acquire renewed impulse and substance". Nevertheless, the post-Kantian developments, which Tennemann regarded as repeating – in new forms – the opposition between dogmatism (in its two versions of realism and idealism) and scepticism, were somehow necessary. Tennemann therefore concludes his manual with the following words: "all these attempts, although not fully in accordance with the spirit and purpose of true philosophy, ought to revive the hope that sooner or later reason will achieve self-knowledge, that it will keep to its own sphere, will increasingly cultivate the true method of philosophizing, and will learn, thanks to past experience, to better avoid the rocks on which original thinkers have been wrecked so far. A time will come when even those modes of philosophizing which now appear to us false paths (*Abwege*) will be acknowledged to be the necessary conditions for the true culture of reason" (pp. 359–360).

#### 11.2.4.4 The Method

Tennemann accorded great importance and therefore devoted extensive parts of his theoretical writings to a preliminary definition of the methodological rules to be followed in elaborating a “scientific” history of philosophy. In his lengthy ‘Einleitung’ to the *Geschichte*, the first part – the ‘Theorie’ – is intended to be related to the second part – the ‘Methodologie’. As for the first part, Tennemann admitted that he had been preceded by the Kantian theorists, albeit to a very limited extent, and even by more recent historians of philosophy, like Tiedemann and Buhle; as for the second part, however, the methodology, he was convinced that almost nothing had been accomplished before him (*Gesch.*, I, p. VI; see above, p. 845). This opinion itself serves to show that Tennemann had a very limited awareness of the contribution made by the Enlightenment, from Bayle onwards, to the definition of a historiographical methodology also suited for the history of philosophy. Indeed, what he believed was the result of another persuasion of his, namely, that only the critical change which had taken place in philosophy had been able to create the conditions to raise the subject of the history of philosophy to the level of reflection, elevating it for the first time to the dignity of a science. We naturally dealt with Tennemann’s “theory of method” (*Methodenlehre*) when defining his concept of the history of philosophy. Now it may be of interest to draw a comparison between some of the methodical rules he formulated in a theoretical context and the methodology he effectively applied in his actual activity as a historian.

In his theoretical writings, Tennemann always defines the history of philosophy as a “presentation (*Darstellung*) of the gradual formation of philosophy as a science”; he uses the term “account” (*Erzählung*) on a single occasion in order to distinguish the “presentation” of systems consisting in their “deduction from principles” from the presentation of systems as made by history, which “also presents them, but as they appeared” through time (I, p. XLVII). The facts of philosophy must be presented not only in their causal connection – which corresponds to the “pragmatic value” of the history of philosophy – but also, and above all, in their exact relation to the endpoint of history, assigning each of them its own place “along the path towards (*zur*) science”. The model to which everything must be referred is critical philosophy, which is not identified with philosophy as a science – which, like all sciences, progresses indefinitely – but constitutes rather a “propaedeutic” to it, that is, its methodical and architectural foundation. Only the relation to that endpoint can allow a “general” history of philosophy: in Tennemann’s view, this was to become the specific characteristic and the novelty of his history. The “general” history of philosophy, as a “presentation” (*Darstellung*) of its formation as a science, was given the task of proving the “truth” of critical philosophy on a historical level (see above, pp. 855–856).

According to this way of understanding the history of philosophy, all phases of the historian’s work must obviously be accompanied by evaluation, from the choice of materials to their presentation. But in order to let the history perform the function it has been assigned better, Tennemann undertook the task, at the end of each period into which he had divided the history of philosophy, of providing



an assessment of what had been accomplished in the period in question – both as regard to form and to content – in the direction of science. Tennemann follows this methodical rule especially in the initial volumes on ancient philosophy, where the treatment of each period always ends with a broad “overview” (*Uebersicht*) of the results obtained in that period by philosophy on its way towards science. Since the criterion of judgement is provided by Kant’s philosophy – according to which none of the systems of the ancients constitutes true progress in a proper sense, as to content, because they are all either dogmatic, albeit in varied ways, or sceptic – any progress concerns the formal element, the partitioning of philosophy, such as for example the distinction between speculative and practical philosophy, the definition of the questions of speculative philosophy (world, soul, God), or the determination of the question of the highest good as a relation between the concepts of virtue and happiness, and so on.

Later on, when dealing with Christian philosophy, and then above all with humanistic and modern philosophy, Tennemann’s assessment of the progress made by philosophy as a science within that period becomes less important than his judgement of individual authors. This is due to the fact that each of the subsequent cycles repeats the great cycle of ancient philosophy, albeit with a different degree of methodological awareness, with the opposition between dogmatism and scepticism, rationalistic dogmatism and empiricist dogmatism, scepticism and “supernaturalism”, “rationalistic supernaturalism” and “historical supernaturalism”, and so on. Because “in philosophizing the Greek spirit attempted all routes and methods, except the critical method” (VI, p. 483), the true difference between ancient and modern ultimately concerns the different degree of clarity and rigour in the method, even though the essential progress is only brought about by the acquisition of a critical approach which determines a transition from the phase of proceeding *towards* science to that of progressing *within* science (or rather, it should have done, because with the passing of time, as is evident from the *Grundriss*, Tennemann sees the ancient divisions repeat themselves).

The facts narrated by the history of philosophy take place entirely inside philosophy itself. References to political and social or even religious events, so abundant in the works of scholars like Meiners and Tiedemann, are almost totally absent here. The political events occurring in Greece in the age of Socrates are hardly mentioned (II, pp. 6–9); indeed, Tennemann speaks of the conquests of Alexander the Great, the rise of the great Hellenistic monarchies, Rome and the Empire, but assembles everything together in the space of a few pages (V, pp. 5–15), in the introduction to the fourth period, which deals with philosophy during the Imperial Age. The developments of ancient Stoicism and Epicureanism, the sceptic phase of the Academy, the opposition between Stoic dogmatism and Academic “probabilism”, and the eclecticism of the new Academy are all described without any reference to political and social events, following a logic which belongs to philosophical reasoning. As for Neoplatonic philosophy, Tennemann acknowledges the external factors, such as the contributions from the East and the Christian influence, but he greatly reduces their importance in comparison with a sort of logical derivation of “supernaturalism” from “scepticism”.

As previously said, he deals at length with the Christian religion, but places it after Neoplatonism, for Tennemann's aim is to emphasize the transformation which saw original Christianity become a Church founded on a complex of dogmas, hierarchically organized, and thereby to explain the long period constituted by Patristic philosophy and Scholasticism. There is a mention of external causes again in order to explain the end of this Patristic and Scholastic period, in the introductory chapter to the philosophy of Humanism and the Renaissance which refers to the political events and the socio-economic transformations of the period, as well as to the contacts with Byzantium, the invention of printing, and obviously the Reformation (IX, pp. 12–48). In this case too, however, the space devoted to them is certainly limited when compared with the histories of philosophy written at the time. Other examples might be given with respect to the modern age. On a theoretical level, Tennemann had maintained the need to focus attention on the *direct* object of the history of philosophy, which is represented by “philosophemes”, while not leaving out all that which, having influenced thinkers, must concern the history of philosophy *indirectly*; yet, in his actual historiographical practice, the theoretical frameworks imposed on the periods finally prevail, so that the resulting overall structures appear to be rather rigid, even though the individual authors included in these frameworks are effectively discussed more flexibly.

As regards the questions characterizing philosophy, Tennemann tends to direct his attention to those contents which can be more easily viewed within the frame of Kantian systematics. The thought elaborated by the ancients is presented according to a systematism which adapts texts and testimonies to the articulations of modern thought, that is to say logic – the theory of knowledge – metaphysics (divided, in turn, into ontology, cosmology, psychology, and theology), and ethics. The pre-Socratics, for example – and here Tennemann was anticipating an interpretation which was to become rather successful in the nineteenth century, from Zeller onwards – are in substance merely philosophers of nature or cosmologists; logic arises only subsequently, when the polemic between different and opposed systems compels thinkers to engage in defending their systems, and so on. The idea of “system”, in the sense explained above, originates with Plato. Ethics, as conceived of by the ancients, always tends to be reduced to the (Kantian) question of the relationship between virtue and happiness in the concept of the highest good.

As for the moderns, the account constantly follows a systematic of Kantian origin, according pre-eminence to the issue of the nature of knowing and to the three great questions of metaphysics. As for Descartes, Tennemann describes the *cogito*, the soul, God, and the existence of the outer world, but leaves out his physics and the issue of the origin of passions. The account of Locke's thought, an author who interested Tennemann and whom he had even translated into German, is reduced to a summary of the content of books I, II, and IV of the *Essay*; no mention is made, however, of the discussion of language in book III, or of Locke's political and politico-religious thought. Similarly, no reference is made to political economy, which had originated above all in England in the eighteenth century and had already aroused the interest of historians like Buhle.

Each author, within the period or school in which he is included, is discussed separately, regardless of his importance; the presentations of the various figures are obviously of varied length, but the pattern followed in each is rather static. The account always begins with limited biographical information, with references to the major works; in the case of modern authors, footnotes give information on the editions and the existing translations into German and French. Tennemann then sets out the system elaborated by each author, mainly using the texts written by philosophers themselves, or fragments and testimonies in the case of more ancient authors, which he summarizes and discusses in detail, while the footnotes contain quite lengthy quotations in Greek or Latin – for the ancients – and in French or German for the moderns. The works of the English authors are quoted in the original language only when there is no translation; Tennemann often prefers the French translation, more widely-known than the German. There are very few references to critical literature and to contemporary historiography of philosophy.

The presentation of a system is obviously not particularly problematic in the case of those thinkers who are closer in time and are themselves already sufficiently systematic; nevertheless, it may be observed again that even simple summaries, which involve excluding and cutting pieces of the text, tend to follow a systematism of a Cartesian and Kantian nature. More problematic are the ‘non-systematic’ authors, especially those more distant in time. In some cases, the problem is solved by privileging one work over the others (in the case of Leibniz, for example, the *Monadology* for the basic structure of the system, and the *Theodicy* for a set of homogeneous questions); in other cases, the problem is solved by quoting passages from works which are in fact different and then collecting them under rubrics which roughly correspond to the questions characterizing philosophy according to a Kantian framework.

As explained above, Plato represents an extreme case in the application of this criterion, but this way of proceeding is adopted for other authors too. Tennemann regards it as fully legitimate, because, at least in his view, it enables him to reconcile two requirements that he considers to be equally important: to give an account of the system according to a framework reflecting the (substantially Kantian) organic unity of reason, and to present the content of the texts faithfully, summarized, and discussed. Tennemann had in some way theorized this process: philosophemes obviously “must be presented according to the sense and spirit meant by their author”; but the hermeneutical use of critical philosophy, which is nothing other than the “physiology of the human mind”, makes it possible to relate each philosopheme to the “common source” of all philosophizing (*Revision*, col. 547).

The treatment of an author generally ends with a judgement which, in the case of thinkers of some importance, tends to emphasize the “unilateral” aspect of the system, a concept which is intended to express the coexistence of a positive element (*das Verdienst*), a part of truth, but also an erroneous element (*der Mangel, das Gebrechen*), an aspect compromising the ultimate solidity of the edifice. This kind of evaluation is most expressly articulated for the major thinkers, both ancient and modern, whose systems expressed the typical forms of philosophizing of all times (cf. for example *Gesch.*, IV, p. 151). But this type of judgement – observes

Tennemann – in which “the criterion (*der Maßstab*) adopted is the degree of development attained by philosophy in our age” can and must be accompanied by a more partial and relative judgement, which the historian can only formulate if he “moves (*versetzt*) into the epoch in which the philosopher in question was living” (IV, p. 327) and views the progress which was made in relation to the other systems of the same period or taking into account the influence exerted by that system on a historical level.

It very frequently happens that the critical judgement is formulated in terms proper to Kantian philosophy, to translate terms employed by ancient philosophers. Tennemann, however, considers this to be thoroughly legitimate: “to relate (*vortragen*) the philosophemes of the thinkers of the past by means of the terminology of modern philosophy, so as to characterize with greater clarity and precision their spirit (*Geist*) and scientific content (*wissenschaftlicher Gehalt*)” is justified in order to clarify concepts otherwise obscure. Quite a different thing would be “to substitute (*unterschieben*) the doctrines of modern philosophy for the words of ancient philosophers” (*Revision*, col. 347). But this is easier said than done; and most of the time Tennemann’s use of Kant’s terminology also transfers to ancient philosophy meanings and concepts which are in fact totally foreign to it.

The *Grundriss*, with only a few variations, keeps to the schematic framework of the *Geschichte*, eliminating the account and discussion of the texts and restricting itself to a condensed and essential summary of the system elaborated by each of the major authors; minor authors are merely named. However, even the *Grundriss* contains a considerable number of references to first-hand texts: besides setting out a philosopheme, Tennemann almost always gives – in parentheses and in a very contracted but exact form – the reference to a text by the philosopher under discussion or to a precise doxographical report. Before beginning the discussion of an author, he always provides some information about the edition of the works, and the sources, as well as a basic critical bibliography. The judgement he formulates on the system is always distinctly separated from the account, even though the Kantian structure obviously already appears in the choice and arrangement of the material. These features made the *Grundriss* an extremely useful resource for teaching, to be used as a source of information and texts; and its structure as a handbook was such that it could be easily modified and integrated, as shown by the history of its subsequent editions and translations.

#### 11.2.4.5 The Reception

Tennemann’s historiographical work has always been considered as the greatest and most representative expression of Kantian historiography of philosophy. This judgement is well-grounded, but perhaps it has been over-emphasized. Tennemann has provided us with three works concerning the history of philosophy, which, for various reasons, effectively performed an important role: the *Grundriss* which, owing to both internal and external circumstances (only partially related

to the author's Kantianism), enjoyed enormous success in Europe throughout the nineteenth century; the *System der Platonischen Philosophie*, which was not very successful immediately after its publication but is frequently cited in tracing the history of the interpretations of Plato because of its Kantian understanding of Plato's theory of ideas, although in fact the interpretation it provides is less innovative and more linked to the traditional Neoplatonic interpretation than is usually believed; and the *Geschichte der Philosophie*, the work we have been looking at here. Tennemann's fame as a historian of philosophy of Kantian inspiration is rightly due to this latter work. Recent scholars (Santinello, Geldsetzer, Braun, and Gueroult) have naturally focused their attention exclusively on the weighty and undoubtedly significant theoretical and methodological dissertation which opens the first volume, and introduces the reader to the work; much more limited has been the attention devoted to the historiographical work itself. As we shall see, Tennemann's *Geschichte* enjoyed some success at least in Germany, in any event because, together with other histories, it was used by Hegel, and because of the relatively favourable judgement expressed by Zeller; but, in actual fact, its circulation was perhaps not as widespread as is usually believed.

The success of the *Geschichte* was greatly compromised not only by its remaining largely unfinished, but also by the number of years it took to publish the volumes, especially after Tennemann moved to Marburg. Unlike the works by scholars such as Tiedemann or Buhle, which were equally weighty but were all published over a relatively short period of time, and which, in any case, appeared in periods when the philosophical debate was rather one-sided, Tennemann's work was much more rigidly linked to a specific speculative position (Kantianism in its Reinholdian version), and it became out-of-date and generally obsolete even before the series of volumes could complete the treatment of ancient philosophy (note that the volume on Neoplatonism dates from 1806 and that on Patristics from 1809).

The first volumes were received with moderately positive reviews, but over time, notably towards the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, the reviews became increasingly negative. The first review, by an anonymous author but in reality Buhle,<sup>60</sup> appeared in January 1799 in the *Göttingische Anzeigen*, and cannot be said to be particularly benevolent. Tennemann discusses it in the 'Vorrede' to the second volume (see also above, pp. 832–833), but in reality the criticisms raised concern separate points, such as the absence of a section devoted to pre-Greek philosophy, which Tennemann had omitted, the partial and unjust appraisal of historians like Tiedemann, Buhle, and Meiners, whose works Tennemann uses however, bibliographies which "are more like auction registers", and so on. The overall judgement, however, is fairly positive: the theoretical introduction is greatly appreciated, "historical explanations are in many respects excellent", although sometimes "the modern philosopher expresses himself through the mouth of an

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<sup>60</sup>This is attested by the copy of the review which is preserved in the Göttingen University Library, in which the names of the reviewers have been added by hand.

ancient philosopher” (GGA, no. 13 1799, pp. 121–128). Fundamentally, it would seem that Buhle is unhappy with the superior tone adopted by Tennemann towards his fellow historians.

The course of the reception of Tennemann’s major work in Germany can be easily followed in the few journals which proved to be constant in reviewing the entire work as the volumes were gradually published, between 1798 and 1819. Among these journals, the most important was the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, which came out in Jena until 1803 as the official organ of the “Kantianism” taught at that university initially by Reinhold and then by Fichte. At the beginning of the new century, the journal started to change its orientation; from 1804 it was transferred to Halle, where it continued to be issued regularly, while the Jena tradition was carried on by the *Jenaische Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, created at Goethe’s urging and closer to the Romantic movement.<sup>61</sup> During the initial phase, Tennemann himself contributed to the journal by reviewing Tiedemann and perhaps also Buhle, as well as providing his important survey of German historiography at the end of the century, which was published anonymously in 1801 and includes a positive presentation of his own historiographical work (see *Revision*, cols 33–36, 46–47, 62–63, 534, and 538–539). In August 1799, the journal reviewed the two first volumes of the *Geschichte*. The judgement was fairly positive: the work is impartial; despite a few questionable points, “we can guarantee that in recent times there has not been such a complete history of philosophy, built on such a solid structure as the beginning of this work in part already provides, and in part heralds”; the theoretical essay is admirable, although it might have been shorter; a brief initial chapter concerning the “so-called barbarian philosophy” would not have been inappropriate, and perhaps the theme of abstract thought arising from myth in Greece deserved a little more attention; the bibliography should have been more select; yet, the expository part is thoroughly up to expectations, especially the second volume, which is devoted to Socrates and Plato: ALZ, no. 244 (1799), cols 289–293.

As we have said, in 1804 the journal moved to Halle. In November 1806 reviews appeared of volumes III, IV, and V: the reviewer complains of the slow publication, but the overall judgement on the work is still partially positive. The reviewer appreciates above all its compact structure and completeness, which make it easier to read than the works written by Tiedemann and Buhle; the attention given to the process of the “necessary perfecting of philosophy as a supreme science and to its eternal source in man’s reason [. . .] has neither been diverted nor dispersed by the need to view the details of the facts”; unlike before “with ‘his’ system of Platonic philosophy”, Tennemann has now been able to grasp in the texts of the past “a little more of the thoughts of the authors and a little less of himself and Kantian thinking and language”. But then the reviewer moves on to assess the contents, and criticizes some of Tennemann’s fundamental theories, such as the denial of a Platonic phase

<sup>61</sup>Cf. J. Kirchner, *Das deutsche Zeitschriftenwesen, seine Geschichte und seine Probleme* (Wiesbaden, 1958), I, pp. 201–202.

in Aristotle, the lack of a systematism and the empiricism in Aristotle's thought, and so forth; moreover, he would have appreciated a "retrospective outlook on the relationship between Greek philosophy and the other sciences": ALZ, nos 266–268 (1806), cols 249–269.

The review of the sixth volume, which concerns Neoplatonism, is absolutely negative. Published in February 1809, it was written by the same reviewer as before and it allows us to see the changes which had occurred in the philosophical climate, also shown in the reversal in the historiographical judgements on the Enlightenment and Kantian tradition. The account of Plotinus's thought is judged to be rather faithful, but the reviewer does not share the critical observations continually sown throughout the text. In the case of Plotinus, "whichever starting point one takes", Tennemann had written, "one always remains at the centre of the system [...]]. The system is like a circle"; but while for Tennemann this "was meant to be a criticism", for the reviewer "it sounds like praise". Only "critical philosophy, like all rationalistic philosophy, abhors a doctrine which starts from immediate and absolute knowledge"; the thesis that Plotinus's doctrine excludes freedom depends upon a concept of freedom as power of choice (*Willkür, arbitrium*); Plotinus's philosophy is *Schwärmerei* only "for those who, like Tennemann, consider all speculation to be *Schwärmerei*"; the thesis that Plotinus radically misunderstood Plato's doctrines is disputed, point by point, by the reviewer who rather maintains the substantial convergence between the two, and so on: ALZ, nos 48–49 (1809), cols 393–406.

The following year a review of the volume on Patristics appeared. In this case too, the reviewer acknowledges the documentary value of this presentation of the thought of the Fathers, but, on the other hand, radically opposes Tennemann's approach to the problem: "Here Christian philosophy is not assigned the place it should occupy and it deserves as a specific philosophical manifestation [...]]; it is not recognized at all as a philosophy"; from Tennemann's volume "it is not possible to derive the *history of Christian philosophy* [...] because he seems to believe that Christian philosophy is nothing other than a particular use of Greek philosophy made by the Church Fathers and, according to this perspective, he justifiably cannot grant it any autonomous validity" (ALZ, nos 14–15 (1810), cols 105–118). In response to the reviewer, Tennemann defends his "logical" (and not "mystical") interpretation of Plato and his Kantian and Enlightenment conception of Christianity, in the 'Vorrede' to volume VIII: "the Christian religion [...] is not philosophy, although it inevitably contains doctrines which can be known philosophically. This is why the philosophy of the Christian religion in itself does not constitute an object for the history of philosophy, otherwise it would have to deal with all the objects about which it is possible to philosophize" (*Gesch.*, VIII, pp. XIV–XXVIII).

We come across another highly critical attitude in the review published, again in 1810, in the *Heidelbergsche Jahrbücher der Literatur für Theologie, Philosophie und Pädagogik*, III (1810), pp. 57–76 (unfinished). The reviewer presents a comprehensive survey of the description of ancient philosophy contained in the *Geschichte*, while criticizing it radically: the exclusion of non-Greek philosophies is "unforgivable" and depends on Tennemann's arbitrary identification of philosophy with abstract discursive thought (pp. 59–60); this prevents Tennemann from grasping the

profound metaphysical meaning of the speculation elaborated by the early physicists and the Pythagoreans and even the very centrality of the figure of Socrates; Plato is forced into a Kantian framework (pp. 61–65, 68, and 71–73). Slightly more positive is the judgement of the section on Aristotle, “although he, in turn, is forced into the manner of critical philosophy” (p. 74). But the most unconditioned criticism concerns the very idea of the history of philosophy: Tennemann’s “critical” method is judged to be incapable of grasping the necessary manifestation of the spirit in its historical “singularity” and “the infinite revelation of the absolute in the particular”. Since it is unable to raise itself to the level of speculation, Tennemann’s historiography, remarks the reviewer, “is only capable – on the basis of its initial appraisal of the cognitive faculty – of judging all philosophical research which lies below that measure to be insignificant, small, and puerile, nothing but rough beginnings, whereas those that can be placed above that measure are seen as transcendent” (pp. 58–59). In his ‘Vorrede’ to vol. VIII, Tennemann reacted to this attack too – launched by the “philosophy of identity” – by defending, with some naivety, his idea of the history of philosophy: “I cannot accept the invitation, hidden behind the reproach, to build recent philosophy on the basis of history, because a historian of philosophy is not allowed to put any system into history” (*Gesch.*, VIII, pp. XIII–XIV).

In reality, Tennemann, still tied to Reinhold’s simplified and formalistic Kantianism and the framework of the Enlightenment, was no longer attuned to the trends developing in German philosophical culture. Only the *Jenaische Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, which pursued the past tradition of the journal in Jena from 1804 onwards, and with which Tennemann was perhaps still personally linked, published extensive reviews of the *Geschichte* in the years between 1805 and 1811, all by the same author and all decidedly favourable. Around the end of 1805, a long article was published, merging reviews of Tiedemann’s *Geist*, Buhle’s *Lehrbuch*, and the first five volumes of the *Geschichte*: JALZ, nos 268–270 (1805), cols 273–296). This comparative analysis clearly comes out in favour of Tennemann, first of all by reason of the degree of methodological awareness reached: “neither the individual observations formulated by Tiedemann, expressing ideas that are mostly good and right in themselves but unilateral and limited, nor what is affirmed by Buhle in the initial paragraphs of his work – undoubtedly formulated in a concise though much more definite form, and adequate in any case to satisfy his initial intention of simply providing a manual – can be compared with Tennemann’s detailed and profound propaedeutic” (col. 275); but also as regards the contents: the reviewer surveys the interpretations provided by the three historians, always supporting the solution proposed by Tennemann. Among other things, he criticizes the emphasis laid by Tiedemann on the concept of Platonic ideas as substances, as well as Buhle’s interpretation of the Aristotelian doctrine of the understanding in excessively Kantian terms, and in both cases he embraces Tennemann’s position (cols 282–283).

The reviews of the three subsequent volumes of the *Geschichte* (devoted to Neoplatonism, Patristics, and Scholasticism, respectively) are all written by the same author and are extremely favourable to Tennemann (JALZ, no. 250 (1807),



cols 169–176; no. 259 (1809), cols 249–256; nos 180–181 (1811), cols 257–270). But these represent a few isolated voices in the cultural framework of the period, and we cannot exclude the fact that these opinions were prompted by Tennemann himself. In general, the reviews are highly critical as regards the account of ancient philosophy, and less critical as regards the medieval and modern parts (cf. for example ALZ/Erg., nos 134–135 (1814), cols 1065–1077; nos 3–4 (1817), cols 17–28; nos 73–74 (1820), cols 577–589; JALZ, no. 44 (1818), cols 345–351; no. 55 (1821), cols 433–440). This may be due to the fact that the volumes concerning modern philosophy appeared very late and for this part of the treatment, the work remained largely incomplete, but also because of the fact that the field in which greater progress had been made, and continued to be made, was the history of ancient philosophy.

As for the value attributed to Tennemann's *Geschichte* a decade after his death, some useful indications may be derived from Ritter's judgement. In 1829, Wendt had published a new edition of the first volume, concerning Greek philosophy up to Socrates, together with the relevant corrections and additions; after this volume, Wendt, who had previously edited three successful editions of the *Grundriss*, intended to proceed with the publication of the following volumes. Ritter intervened in January 1830 publishing a long review in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*: "when I heard that a second edition of Tennemann's work was being prepared [ . . . ], I recognised the usefulness of the plan on the condition that it was accomplished as I envisaged. A mere reprint was simply not enough. On the one hand, the work might have been easily subjected to cuts; on the other, it should have been enlarged according to the needs of the present age: indeed, its qualities consist substantially in offering a faithful collection of testimonies, for the most part commented on by the text, and in a selection – on the whole satisfactory – of quotations, whereas its flaws are mainly embedded in the critical observations on which the work dwells at length on the doctrines of ancient philosophers. These might justifiably have been either totally omitted or reported very concisely, or again replaced by more appropriate judgements. The collection of testimonies, in turn, should have been enlarged in relation to later research, which is precisely connected with the history of ancient philosophy. The result thus obtained would have been certainly insufficient as a history of philosophy but would have provided a useful collection of materials intended for the history of philosophy, a collection which might have been further completed in later editions": ALZ, no. 11 (1830), cols 81–82 (for a comparison with the judgement expressed by Fries, see below, pp. 932–933).

This might have been a future possibility for Tennemann's work. The method adopted by its author and the external structure of the work, which provides a great number of texts and testimonies in their original language in the footnotes, was particularly suitable – certainly more suitable than the other major works published in the age of Kant – to be used, as for the part devoted to Antiquity, in a way similar to that proposed by Ritter. But Wendt preferred to follow another direction, reproducing Tennemann's work with additions and corrections, and the undertaking was not continued.

In any case, Ritter's words allude to the use commonly made of Tennemann's work during that period: for the sake of the historical material it contained, the completeness of the sources it included, and the copious quotations given in the footnotes, in their original language and clearly distinct from the text. This was substantially how Tennemann's work was used by Hegel, whose judgement was fundamentally negative: "philosophical systems are fully described, and those of the modern age better than those of the ancients [...]. Tennemann believes it essential for the historian to have no philosophy of his own, and he boasts of being in that condition himself; but in reality he too has his system, and he is a critical philosopher. He praises the philosophers, their diligent work, and their genius, but the end of the story is always the same: they are criticised because they have the one defect of not yet being Kantian philosophers and of not having investigated the sources of knowledge" (Hegel<sup>1</sup>, I, pp. 135; Hegel<sup>2</sup>, p. 91). Nevertheless, in his lessons, Hegel turned extensively to Tennemann's work, using it as a collection of sources, fragments, and texts, especially as concerns the pre-Socratics and the medievals (whereas, as for the moderns, he prefers Buhle). Certainly, he often criticizes a reading, and occasionally even a translation, of a passage quoted by Tennemann in a footnote, or expresses totally negative judgements on his interpretation of an author – for instance of Plato, whom Tennemann constrains within the framework of metaphysics in the modern age (Hegel<sup>1</sup>, II, pp. 29 and 65–66; Hegel<sup>2</sup>, pp. 381 and 407) – or of Aristotle's supposed empiricism (Hegel<sup>2</sup>, p. 466; cf. also Hegel<sup>1</sup>, II, p. 145). But the fact remains that Hegel turns to Tennemann very frequently.

But after the publication of the works by Ritter and Brandis, Hegel and the Hegelians, this function also ceased. In 1843, that is to say beyond a time in which one can speak of the "fortune" of Tennemann's *Geschichte*, in a retrospective survey of the German studies on ancient philosophy published in the previous 50 years (published in the Hegelian *Jahrbücher der Gegenwart*), Zeller formulated a judgement which clearly revealed the positive and negative aspects of Tennemann's work from the viewpoint of the new historiography: "Tennemann has really accomplished all that which one might expect from his time"; the *Geschichte* "not only surpasses, as to historical completeness and precision, the previous works [here Zeller refers to Buhle and Tiedemann], but it also has a highly developed scientific character, and without doubt has provided an essential contribution to the progress leading our science from pure scholarly compilation to conceptual elaboration. Besides the diligence and care of its author, this work owes its superiority to the influence exerted by critical philosophy, of which Tennemann must be considered as the major representative in our field; although a positive interest in history finds little justification in the principles of this [Kantian] philosophy, nevertheless, it was necessarily to lead anyone concerned with history to a more rigorous understanding and analysis of the data. At the same time, however, this is precisely the main defect of Tennemann's historiography. In his view, a historian relates to his object in part by referring to it on a mere external level, in part by criticizing it only negatively; gaining a positive insight into the spirit of the different systems and reconstructing the historical development of that spirit from within: from this point of view [that of

Kant], this was impossible. Critical philosophy, in its revolutionary position against any existing philosophy, lacked too much faith in the rationality of the historical course followed by philosophy even to just to attempt to show an internal necessity in this course. Therefore, even though, viewing it from the outside, Tennemann arranged the separate philosophical systems for the most part correctly – and, for example, the pre-Socratics more correctly than most of his successors [note that Zeller saw Tennemann as anticipating his concept of pre-Socratic philosophy as a cosmology] – nevertheless, he could not see the necessity of this arrangement” (Zeller, pp. 9–11).

Outside Germany the success of the *Geschichte* was not great. In England, from the 1830s onwards, philosophical culture opened up to the Continent again, but only to the latest German historiographical production – in the first place Ritter and then historiography of Hegelian inspiration. The only outstanding exception is Samuel Taylor Coleridge, one of the very few English thinkers of the time to have a direct knowledge of Kant’s texts and of the works of the early idealists. Between December 1818 and March 1819, Coleridge held a public course of lectures on the history of philosophy in London. His first intention had been to use Stanley, then Enfield, but he found them inadequate for the purpose. The previous year, he had received from Germany the first ten volumes of the *Geschichte*, and he made extensive use of them in his lectures for presenting ancient and medieval thought; even the overall structure of the course depends largely on Tennemann.<sup>62</sup> The copy used by Coleridge is preserved in the British Library, and the several handwritten notes that it bears in the margin have recently been published<sup>63</sup>; the accusations Coleridge most frequently makes against Tennemann concern his adherence to the Kantian system, always “used as an Organon or Carpenter’s-rule of judgement”<sup>64</sup> which he applies to all past doctrines. The sixth volume, on Neoplatonism, as well as the eighth, on Scholasticism, are copiously annotated: as for the sixth volume, Coleridge judges it “of little value”, because, in his view, Tennemann’s rigid Kantianism, “in letter rather than spirit”, prevented him from fully understanding the philosophy of Neoplatonism.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup>This course of lectures was largely publicized in the newspapers and was attended by a fairly numerous audience, among whom the young William Hamilton; the lectures, except for the first, were transcribed in shorthand, with a view to preparing a publication, which, however, was not carried out; the material was published for the first time in 1949 by K. Coburn and is now available in its entirety (*Lectures 1818–1819: On the History of Philosophy*, 2 vols, ed. J.R. de J. Jackson, in Coleridge, *Collected Works*, Princeton, 2000).

<sup>63</sup>Coleridge, *Collected Works*, 12: *Marginalia*, vol. 5, pp. 691–816.

<sup>64</sup>*Marginalia*, p. 714; and he adds: “The fact is, that Tennemann had so long and with so much comfort and convenience, often too with such real advantage, employed Kant’s *Critique of the Pure Reason*, as a Carpenter’s rule for Reasoning, that he had at length identified with Reason itself” (p. 756); “[...] [I]t is not, I fear, without cause objected to Tennemann, that he turns the Critical Philosophy into Dogmatism” (p. 771).

<sup>65</sup>“How strongly Kantianism, in letter rather than spirit, influenced Tennemann is evident from his inconsistencies with regard to Plato [...]. This vehement Prejudice has rendered this Volume

During the first decades of the century, the works by Meiners and Buhle, translated into French and Italian, enjoyed much greater success in France and Italy. In the first edition (1804) of the *Histoire comparée*, Degérando limits himself to citing Tennemann's name, besides the names of all German historians after Brucker (Degérando<sup>1</sup> [1804], I, p. 62). In the second edition, he briefly remarks: the *Geschichte* "is the completest work after Brucker's [...]. No other historian appears to be [...] as equally immersed in the authentic spirit of each philosophical doctrine [...]; he has carefully disentangled the knot joining the parts of each system together [...]; by his correct discernment, he has selected the most significant aspects and circumstances to compose pictures or create analogies [...]. We consider that the picture of Plato's philosophy and the analysis of Plotinus's doctrine are those of greater worth [...]. Once he comes to contemporary schools, the historian obviously becomes rather partisan; he therefore loses his impartiality, and his work provides a more limited choice, and its execution appears weaker as well" (Degérando<sup>2</sup> [1822], I, pp. 159–161). Degérando's judgement is in some way opposed to Hegel's, who appreciated Tennemann more as a historian of modern philosophy than of ancient philosophy, although he made use of him as the latter and not the former. Degérando, like other non-German commentators after him, also reproached Tennemann for making "almost exclusive" use of Kantian terminology, so that "he makes it difficult for a great number of readers to understand a work whose merits should earn it widespread success" (Degérando<sup>2</sup> [1822], I, p. 161).

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of little value – not sufficiently minute or learned to be a store-house of facts – & for the rest, he [Tennemann] saw nothing but in the light of its agreement or disagreement with Kantian *Mechanique* [i.e. a 'mechanical' version of Kant's system]. This is painfully true in his account of the Eclectic [i.e. the Neoplatonic] Philosophers. From the date of the Volume [1807] it is evident, that Tennemann had two objects in view, first, to shew the identity of the Neoplatonic System, especially as exhibited by Plotinus and Proclus, with the *Natur-philosophie* of Schelling and his School, 2<sup>nd</sup> to confute the latter under the name of the former [...]" (*Marginalia*, pp. 742–743); and, a little later, referring again to Tennemann's pages on ancient Neoplatonism, he observes: "This is no longer a History of Philosophy; but a polemic Tract against Neo-kantian Anti-kantians, Fichte under the name of Plotinus and Schelling of Proclus" (p. 753). Nevertheless, except for its rigid adherence to the letter of Kantianism, Coleridge, like many others during the first half of the nineteenth century, appears to appreciate Tennemann's *Geschichte* for its richness in materials as well as for subdividing the latter under specific headings: "A valuable work, and what is at present a desideratum in Literature, might be composed by selecting the historical and dogmatic facts from Tennemann's work, omitting his partial interpretations *secundum principia Kantianismi* – or rather abridging them as much as possible, in order to return them as the Sense which the words would bear, *if* the Philosopher, from whom the Dogma is extracted, had been exclusively a *Categoric* or *Verstand*sphilosoph [i.e. a philosopher of the intellect or *Verstand*, as opposed to *Vernunft* or reason]; while in an opposite Column should be given the Sense, which the same words would bear, *if* we suppose him to have used them as Symbols of Ideas [...]. The Subdivisions, and Modifications, as Materialists, Idealists, Sensationists, Conceptionists, &c &c would find their own places [...]. I can imagine a map in which the different great genera of Philosophy might be represented as Rivers, while instead of towns and Cities there would be the names of the Professors in the different ages" (*Marginalia*, pp. 691–692; see also Jackson, *Introduction to Lectures 1818–1819: On the History of Philosophy*, pp. LVI–LXVII, and J. Vigus, *Platonic Coleridge*, London, 2002, pp. 93–124).

In his famous lectures of 1828, Cousin had spoken of Tennemann's *Geschichte* in very positive, perhaps even too positive terms. In the twelfth lecture, he established a comparison between Tiedemann and Tennemann, whom he considered to be, in the field of the history of philosophy, expressions of two opposite speculative positions – Locke and Condillac's empiricism and Kantian idealism, respectively: "the general character of Tennemann's work consists in reproducing Kant's philosophy in the history of philosophy"; if compared with Tiedemann, Tennemann's "historical point of view", that of critical idealism, "is more comprehensive, thus less negative"; Tennemann "is just as erudite and worthy as a critic as Tiedemann, but less sceptical, and he acknowledges the authenticity of many works which his predecessor had denied [...] Tennemann is more progressive; he relates the history of philosophy pertaining to each period to the general history of that period more closely [...], and indeed this improved order, less external and less arbitrary, imparts a more philosophical character to the whole. By emphasizing the general ideas which prevailed in the different epochs, and by expressing these ideas in the forms proper to the science whose history he is describing, namely metaphysics, Tennemann paved the way for that higher viewpoint which sees in history nothing other than ideas, their succession, conflict, and development, well-ordered in spite of their apparent disorder, and therefore identifies in it a true system, a complete philosophy". Tennemann's Kantianism undoubtedly also represents his limitation: "since he only sees through Kant's eyes, he does not see everything; so, instead of understanding, he criticizes [...]. For Tennemann, Kant's philosophy is like a Procrustean bed: he lays all systems out on it, and if some system is too long or does not cover it, the rigorous Kantian objects to it, and gives himself up to complaints and regrets which are quite ridiculous, especially when the system at issue is decidedly greater than he had judged" (Cousin, pp. 332–335).

A separate issue is represented by the success enjoyed by the *Grundriss*, first in Germany, then in Europe and in the United States. Between 1812 and 1829, the *Grundriss* saw five editions and, as shown by the reviews, at least up to the fourth edition, including the latter, it was generally appreciated. Even Hegel encouraged his students to make use of Wendt's edition of the *Grundriss* for "more detailed information", such as bibliographical references.<sup>66</sup>

The knowledge and diffusion of Tennemann's *Grundriss* outside Germany was greatly fostered by Cousin's translation into French (Paris, 1829). The translation was carried out on the basis of the 1825 edition (but omits the part concerning philosophy after Schelling, apart from the bibliography and a few biographical notes), and in his 'Préface' Cousin repeats in short the judgement on Tennemann he had expressed in the lecture held the previous year (pp. XIX–XXVI). Cousin's

<sup>66</sup>Cf. Hegel<sup>1</sup>, I, p. 133; Hegel<sup>2</sup>, p. 90; and, as far as medieval philosophy is concerned, cf. Hegel<sup>1</sup>, III, p. 123; Hegel<sup>2</sup>, p. 720; the verdict on Wendt's additions concerning more recent post-Kantian philosophy, is, however, highly critical: "[...] It is astonishing to see how [in this work] anything is passed off as philosophy, without distinguishing whether it is important or not; and these so-called philosophies grow out of the ground like mushrooms [...]" (Hegel<sup>2</sup>, p. 91; Hegel<sup>1</sup>, I, p. 136).

translation, also due to the translator's renown, made Tennemann's work extremely successful throughout Europe. This was the source of the Italian translation by Francesco Longhena (Milan, 1832), and in part also of the English translation by Arthur Johnson (Oxford, 1832). A more in-depth description of the European translations of the *Grundriss*, and their relationship to that by Cousin, is given above (pp. 866–867).

The European reception of the *Grundriss* should be judged by considering that the work circulated as a simple manual or handbook for students. Cousin translated the *Grundriss* with the aim of using it as a textbook for his lessons.<sup>67</sup> This applies to Longhena's Italian translation as well, which was used for over two decades by Poli in his lessons in Padua, and to Modena's translation,<sup>68</sup> as well as to Johnson's English translation. These translators added supplements to their translations, either personally edited by them or by others, and occasionally left out passages, as for example Johnson did, omitting "those passages [from the *Grundriss*] which seemed to oppose revealed religion" (p. IX). They all intended to provide a useful tool for students and teachers. In any case, this was precisely the purpose for which Tennemann had written it (cf. *Grundriss*, pp. 3–4). Still two decades later, in his review of Johnson's translation, Hamilton made it clear: "the *Grundriss* of

<sup>67</sup>The French translation made by Cousin (see *The Athenaeum*, no. 137, June 12 (1830), pp. 354–356, and no. 139, June 28 (1830), pp. 386–388) and later on the English translations made by Johnson and Morell were used in Great Britain "as a handbook in colleges" (see *The British Quarterly Review*, 1886, p. 597) approximately up to the 1880s (the last reprint of Morell's edition dates to 1878); the same happened in France and in Italy with the translations made by Cousin, Longhena, and Modena, respectively. However, the *Grundriss* did not only enjoy success as a manual for students: in 1865, the French physiologist and physician Claude Bernard read it in Cousin's French translation, made a summary of it, and wrote a commentary on it (cf. C. Bernard, *Philosophie. Manuscrit inédit* (Paris, 1954), pp. 1–24); in the United States, in the 1830s and 1840s, it became well-known and widely employed (both in Cousin's and in Johnson's translations) by some exponents of the New England Transcendentalism (cf. H.A. Pochmann, *German Culture in America*, Madison, 1957); James Murdock availed himself of the *Grundriss* (in the 1829 German edition) as a source for his successful essay *Sketches of Modern Philosophy Especially among the Germans* (Hartford, 1842, 1846<sup>2</sup>), p. 2). The young Edgar Allan Poe as well availed himself of Tennemann (in addition to Schlegel and Tiedemann) for three articles he writes about the 'Philosophy of the Antiquity' (*Southern Literary Messenger*, vol. 2, Nov. 1836, pp. 739–740; vol. 3, Jan. 1837, pp. 32–34; Feb. 1837, p. 158; cf. M. Alterton, *Origins of Poe's Critical Theory* (New York, 1965), pp. 105–110).

<sup>68</sup>The translation of the *Grundriss* by abbot Modena, who taught the history of philosophy at the University of Pavia and used the manual for his lessons, occasioned a strong, although belated, censorial intervention on the part of the Church of Rome; with regard to Modena's translation, the Sacred Congregation of the Index, with a decree dated 5<sup>th</sup> April 1845, included Tennemann's *Grundriss* in the *Index librorum prohibitorum* (List of Prohibited Books); the reasons for this condemnation are all to be found in Tennemann's Kantianism, in addition to his positive judgments on authors condemned by the Church, such as Bruno, Campanella, Spinoza, and others. Tennemann's *Grundriss* was forbidden "*absolute quocumque idiomate*", that is, not only the German original version or Modena's translation, but also all the other translations, however mended and expurgated; on this matter, cf. Tolomio, *Italarum sapientia. L'idea di esperienza nella storiografia filosofica italiana dell'età moderna*, pp. 144–159.

Tennemann was not intended by its author as an independent treatise. It is merely a *text-book*, that is, an outline of statements to be filled up, and fully illustrated in his lectures” (ER, LVI, 1832–1833, p. 98).

We come across another similar judgement in the text prefaced by the eclectic abbot Modena to the translation of the *Grundriss* he carried out for his students in Pavia: “[...] this is a pithy compendium which does not weigh on the reader with burdensome details, but rather provides what is most outstanding and essential [...], it is chosen as a textbook even by the University of Vienna, where still today it is ordinarily employed in teaching this discipline [...]. It is certain that Tennemann, as a disciple of Kant, retains in his work, besides the form and language, also the spirit that imbues the school to which he belongs. Yet, after the publication of careful analysis and well-judged criticisms of Kantian philosophy, such as those by Degérando and Cousin, who would not nowadays take advantage of both the virtues and the defects of the new German doctrines? Who would not agree with Kant in grounding all philosophical speculation on the previous study of the faculty of knowing and its laws? Who would dare become entangled in the perilous paths of an ontology manifestly tending towards scepticism? Who would content himself with a morality reduced to infertile ground, where stoic rigidity stifles the comforting emotions arising from feeling?”. And he concludes: “in any case, there is no doubt that, all things considered, no other work has been more widely acknowledged as praiseworthy than that by Tennemann” (*Compendio della storia della filosofia* [...], I, pp. 12–13).

This applies to most of the many people who employed Tennemann’s handbook in European schools during the nineteenth century, especially outside Germany, albeit variously integrated and updated. Generally, they were not Kantians or idealists, but in the main they believed they were almost totally immune from the danger of being “contaminated” by Kantianism or idealism. And yet, it was also through Tennemann’s manual that some knowledge of German philosophy became widespread and, in addition, several interpretative structures and historiographical judgements of Kantian origin began to circulate, and a conception of the history of philosophy as a pure succession of mutually conflicting systems was propagated. This perspective was finally adopted and shared, most of the time unintentionally, by thinkers greatly different from one another, and established itself in the course of time by pervading the handbook tradition.

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## 11.3 Jakob Friedrich Fries (1773–1843)

### *Die Geschichte der Philosophie*

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**11.3.1** Jakob Friedrich Fries was born on 23rd August, 1773, in Barby on the River Elba, where his parents were active in the local community of Count Zinzendorf’s Moravian Brethren. Educated in the Zinzendorffian *Brüdergemeinde* Institutes, he revealed a gift for physics and mathematics at an early age, and he gradually moved away from Pietist religiosity and Christian dogmas in general. In 1795, he enrolled at Leipzig University but in the following year transferred to Jena, where his aversion for the doctrines professed by Fichte brought him closer to the Kantian scholars, Carl Christian Erhard Schmid and Tennemann. After working for some years in Switzerland as a preceptor (1797–1800), Fries returned to Jena, obtaining his authorised professorship in 1801 with a dissertation entitled *De intuitu intellectuali*, which was openly polemical towards Fichte and Schelling.

In 1805, at the same time as Hegel, he became a supernumerary professor, but in the same year he accepted the post of full professor of philosophy in Heidelberg, where from 1812 he also held the chair of physics. In the spring of 1816, the university senate of Berlin proposed him (together with Hegel) as a candidate to succeed Fichte, but the proposal was not accepted mainly due to Schleiermacher’s

opposition; in the autumn of the same year, Fries accepted the appointment to the chair of logic and metaphysics at Jena, and Hegel succeeded him in Heidelberg. Having been involved in the students' revolts of 1817, in 1819 Fries saw his status deteriorate when the reactionary publicist Kotzebue was assassinated in Mannheim by one of his own pupils, the student of theology, Karl Sand. Under Austro-Prussian pressure, the Weimar government was forced to suspend him from teaching and exile him from Jena. However, as early as 1820 Fries was able to return to the city and take up the post of professor of physics. At the end of the same year, he obtained authorisation to teach philosophy *privatissima* in his own home until he was officially reinstated in 1837. From that year, the elderly professor's health began to decline while recognition of his work, even on the part of the general public, increased. Appointed vice-chancellor towards the end of 1842 (a post he had held in 1832), he was unable to give the official speech that had already been prepared: struck down on the first day of the new year by a serious attack of apoplexy and left in a state of partial mental infirmity, Fries died on 10th August, 1843.

**11.3.2** Fries' literary output is considerable, consisting of around a hundred titles if his posthumous works are included, while the photostatic edition of his complete works, edited by G. König and L. Geldsetzer, was planned to fill 33 volumes (J.F. Fries, *Sämtliche Schriften* [...], Aalen, 1967 ff.). This production is characterised by an encyclopedic knowledge that embraces both the natural and the psychological sciences, and by the early acquisition of his theoretical perspective, which was to run through the articulation and expansion of his system: in his first work of 1798 (five essays published anonymously in Schmid's *Psychologisches Magazin: Sämtl. Schriften*, vol. 2, 1982, pp. 251–497), his programme for the anthropological and psychological reform of Kant's criticism, which characterises Fries' speculation, was already clearly outlined. Here we provide a short list of Fries' major works, according to the systematic articulation proposed by the editorial plan of *Sämtl. Schriften*. Fries' theoretical philosophy is fully set out in his greatest work, *Neue Kritik der Vernunft* (Heidelberg, 1807, 3 vols; 2nd edition: *Neue oder anthropologische Kritik der Vernunft*, Heidelberg, 1827–1831, 3 vols). Logic and metaphysics are dealt with in the *System der Logik* (Heidelberg, 1811), and the *System der Metaphysik* (Heidelberg, 1824). The philosophy of law is developed in the *Philosophische Rechtslehre* (Jena, 1803), while the first volume of the *Handbuch der praktischen Philosophie* is devoted to ethics (*Die allgemeinen Lehren der Lebensweisheit und die Tugendlehre*, Heidelberg, 1818). His *Politik* appeared posthumously in Jena in 1848, edited by his pupil E.F. Apelt.

Aesthetic and philosophical and religious themes are specifically dealt with in *Die Religionsphilosophie oder die Weltzwecklehre* (also entitled: *Handbuch der Religionsphilosophie und philosophischen Ästhetik*), published in Heidelberg in 1832 as the second part of the *Handbuch der praktischen Philosophie; Die Lehren der Liebe, des Glaubens und der Hoffnung* (Heidelberg, 1823), a work for a wider public. His work on the science of nature is equally impressive, from his *Mathematische Naturphilosophie nach philosophischer Methode bearbeitet* (Heidelberg, 1822) to the *Versuch einer Kritik der Prinzipien der Wahrscheinlichkeitsrechnung* (Braunschweig, 1842); from the *Entwurf des Systems der theoretischen Physik*

(Heidelberg, 1813) to his *Populare Vorlesungen über die Sternkunde* (Heidelberg, 1818; 2nd ed. 1833). There is also a philosophical novel: *Julius und Evagoras oder die neue Republik* (Heidelberg, 1814; 2nd ed. 1823, in two volumes, entitled: *Julius und Evagoras oder die Schönheit der Seele*). Some of his polemical works should also be mentioned not least for example *Von deutscher Philosophie Art und Kunst* (Heidelberg, 1812), where Fries sides with Jacobi in the latter's lively polemic with Schelling on "divine things", and above all *Reinhold, Fichte und Schelling* (Leipzig, 1803; 2nd ed. in *Polemische Schriften*, Vol I, Halle and Leipzig, 1824) which, with its acute, lively criticism of the idealist developments of Kant's doctrine, brought the free professor in Jena to the attention of German philosophical culture.<sup>69</sup>

In the historiographical field, a considerable contribution to theory and methodology is provided by the essays brought together under the title of *Tradition, Mysticismus und gesunde Logik, oder über die Geschichte der Philosophie. Drei Abhandlungen* (see below, 11.3.3). Some of these reflections are contained in Fries' later historiographical works, particularly the *Geschichte der Philosophie* (Halle, 1837–1840, 2 vols: *Sämtl. Schriften*, vols 18–19, 1969), which constitute his most conspicuous contribution to the historiography of philosophy. One should, however, also recall the minor studies, the earliest of which are the *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie. I. Heft. Ideen zur Geschichte der Ethik überhaupt und insbesondere Vergleichung der aristotelischen Ethik mit der neueren deutschen* (Heidelberg, 1819, pp. vi–154). In these 'contributions' (conceived along the lines of the *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie*, 1791–1799, by Georg Gustav Fülleborn; see above, pp. 776–778), Fries intended to provide a collection of monographical essays. In practice, only this first booklet appeared, whose theme was a comparison of ancient and modern (especially German) ethics. The first section ('Bemerkungen zur Geschichte der Ethik', pp. 1–76) begins by setting out the general characteristics of Greek thought compared to modern thought according to Fries' typical theory of the logical degrees of the development of the spirit, which we shall examine in greater detail below: Greek philosophy belongs to the period of inductive development from experience to logical-conceptual principles, whereas modern-Christian philosophy belongs to the speculative phase of systematic expansion-deduction starting from principles. Greek ethics is marked by actual fact, and only intellectual self-control (*Selbstbeherrschung des Verstandes*) over instincts and passions; modern ethics, on the other hand, takes the theme of human dignity and men's equality in the eyes of God from Christianity. The second section ('Αριστοτέλους Ἠθικῶν Νικομαχείων Τόποι, pp. 77–154) is an in-depth analysis of Aristotelian ethics, based mainly, but not exclusively, on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which examines some of the Stagirite's theories: (a) the primacy of politics as the science of

<sup>69</sup>The anonymous reviewer of the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* observes: "The philosophers named in the title have already found many adversaries, but certainly none of them has penetrated more deeply into the spirit of the critical system and their systems, and is on the same level as these three philosophers as far as acumen and knowledge are concerned. [...] This work deserves one of the highest places in the more recent history of philosophy, and it is a highly significant contribution to this very history" (ALZ, IV, 1803, nos 320–321, col. 353).

the supreme end and of good; (b) happiness as the supreme end; (c) the nature of justice as equality; and (d) the relationship between temperance (σοφροσύνη) and continence (ἐνκράτεια). While not without polemical hints, Fries's analysis constitutes as a whole a defence and a reappraisal of Aristotelian ethics compared to the dogmatic and mystical deviations of Christian-modern ethics.

In the pamphlet *Platons Zahl der Republica* l. 8 p. 546 Steph. *Eine Vermuthung* (Heidelberg, 1823: *Sämtl. Schriften*, vol. 20, 1969, pp. 357–384), Fries tries his hand at mathematics in order to determine the “nuptial number” in *Resp.* VIII, 546 b-c, one of the most famous puzzles in Platonic exegesis, proposing 5,040 as the expression of the “comprehensive geometric number” that regulates the cycle of human generations (as far as we know, Fries' suggestion has yet to be taken up by those who have concerned themselves with this enigma of Plato's). Let us also mention a brief, yet significant essay of 1828, ‘Bemerkungen über des Aristoteles Religionsphilosophie’, which appeared in the review *Für Theologie und Philosophie. Eine Oppositionsschrift*, published by Fries in collaboration with Wilhelm Schröter and Heinrich Schmid (I/1, pp. 140–167: *Sämtl. Schriften*, vol. 20, pp. 387–414). Basing himself on the documents on the *Vindiciae theologiae Aristoteleae* (Leipzig, 1795) by the glottologist Johann Severin Vater, he defends the organic and unitary nature of Aristotle's religious conception, which culminated in the doctrine of God as the prime unmoving mover of the universe and, at the same time, the transcendent spiritual principle (νοῦς). Aristotelian religious thought thus seems to Fries to agree basically with that of Plato (despite the criticism of the doctrine of ideas) thanks to its teleological and spiritualist features. Finally, we must briefly mention *Das Lob der wissenschaftlichen Trockenheit*, published posthumously in 1929 by the neo-Friesian Leonard Nelson in the re-established “Abhandlungen der Fries'schen Schule” (new series, vol. 5, 1, pp. 3–20: *Sämtl. Schriften*, vol. 20, pp. 415–434). As the subtitle indicates, it is the “draft for a conference on the meaning of the history of philosophy”, in which the “praise of scientific sobriety” provides Fries with the opportunity to contest the verbose obscurity of Hegelian philosophy but also to reiterate some characteristic theories of his own reflexion on the history of philosophy and, above all, the need for a speculative-systematic understanding of the historical development of thought.

**11.3.3** Perhaps Fries' great rival, Hegel, was the only other philosopher at that time to unite original theoretical elaboration with historiographical activity and, in addition, a proper theory of the history of philosophy. Here we shall principally examine *Tradition, Mysticismus und gesunde Logik oder über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, the work in which Fries gives greatest expression to his historiographical concepts. It consists of three *Abhandlungen* published in Heidelberg in 1811 in the *Studien* of Carl Daub and Friedrich Creuzer (vol. 6, 1: ‘I. Vom Zweck und Wesen der Geschichte der Philosophie’, pp. 1–73; Heft 2: ‘II. Die Stufen der Entwicklung, welche die Geschichte der Philosophie durchlaufen muss’, pp. 331–401; ‘III. Belege aus der Geschichte’, pp. 402–446; see *Sämtl. Schriften*, vol. 20, pp. 1–191, to which we shall refer).

From the very opening pages of the first *Abhandlung*, dedicated to explaining the “aim and nature of the history of philosophy”, Fries outlines the strict, organic

connection between philosophy and the history of philosophy, placing the problem of the latter in the wider debate on the true method of philosophical speculation. The dispute between the mysticism of the new, idealist metaphysics, and “healthy logic” is resolved by the critical method, which Fries sees in the “wholly subjective turning-point of all speculation”, which uses the “introspective self-observation” (*innere Selbstbeobachtung*) of our reason as a tool (p. 12). Fries’ reflections on the history of philosophy have this theoretical background, that is to say, the reform of the Kantian criticism of reason in an anthropological and psychological sense, because he intends “to demonstrate, by means of the proof offered by, and in, the history of philosophy, that it is only thanks to this anthropological treatment of philosophy that it is possible to acquire soundness and clarity in speculation”. Fries’ subordination of the history of philosophy to philosophy already clearly emerges from this intention: if it is true that “philosophy is a science of selfconscious thought (*eine Wissenschaft des Selbstdenkens*)”, then “anyone who, instead of asking himself about truth, restricts himself to enquiring into who said this or that, or what another really meant to say, that is, who sets out to classify philosophical systems exclusively as if they were flowers and butterflies, has nothing to do with philosophy itself” (pp. 18–19).

Having thus established the limits and the subordinate function of the history of philosophy, Fries intends to define its statute by distinguishing a “true history of philosophy” from a merely “biographical” and “literary” one (that is, in the sense of the history of philosophical production, *philosophische Literaturgeschichte*). Yet even the “history of philosophical doctrines” (*philosophische Dogmengeschichte*) and the “history of philosophical systems” still represent something secondary if “we have not previously acquired an immediate knowledge of life in the history of philosophy” (pp. 21–24). This life, which is capable of developing historically, cannot be found in content, which is common to all ages, but in “form”. It is, indeed, the result of “reflection” as the specific activity of philosophy: it is, therefore, not truth, which is the common heritage of the whole history of mankind, but the reflection on it that “propels the mechanism of the whole history of mankind forward, hence also that of philosophy. Reflection is precisely the aspect of man that can be educated (*das Bildungsfähige im Menschen*); through what this confers to the history of philosophy, the latter is connected to the history of man in general and to the history of the sciences” (p. 29).

We thus understand how for Fries the history of philosophy is the “history of the *logical* development of the human spirit”, the “development of the art of abstracting”, and how the historical course of philosophy should therefore be articulated according to the tasks set to the logical development of the spirit. These tasks are: “a) learning to think for oneself; b) creating abstractions; and c) learning to understand the meaning of abstractions”. However, if thought exercises criticism through the elaboration of abstractions, this activity is carried out in “language and abstraction, word and concept” (pp. 31–32); hence the importance of the linguistic factor, of *Sprachbildung*, to which Fries pays particular attention, reflecting on the reciprocal conditioning between conceptual and linguistic development in the history of philosophy. Even more extensive and profound, however, is his reflection

on the conditions that make it possible to understand the meaning of abstractions (and this is the third task of *logische Ausbildung*), since here Fries leads the historiographical theme back to his anthropological re-elaboration of criticism as the only adequate basis for understanding. The first *Abhandlung* thus ends with an explanation of the internal articulations and the categorial determinations of the Friesian system, according to a “table of abstractions” (pp. 40–75) which constitutes an extremely interesting summary.

After this long systematic parenthesis, Fries returns to his epistemological reflection on the history of philosophy in the second *Abhandlung*, where he programmatically deals with the “degrees of development that the history of philosophy has to go through”. It is precisely the sense of this need that Fries intends to clarify first, pointing out that it is not a matter of “somehow thinking up a history *a priori*, but of coming to the aid of the historical view of philosophy with the means of science itself, through maxims for guidance” (p. 76). Here, therefore, are the “regulatory principles” taken from the very nature of the history of philosophy itself: (1) the triple “physical, ethical, and teleological task”, according to the ideas of truth, good, and beauty: from the systematic dialectics of these ideas and the corresponding tasks it is possible “to determine in advance and in general the historically changing, reciprocal relations between theory, ethics, and aesthetics” (pp. 78–80); (2) “the conflict between *Intuition*, *Induktion*, and *Spekulation*”, which is at the same time “the supreme regulatory principle for the history of philosophy” since it constitutes the most general and profound methodical contrast one may find in this very history itself as the history of the logical development of reflection or the history of abstractions (p. 80); (3) the conflict between dogmatism and scepticism, which is periodically renewed in the history of philosophy until it is resolved in criticism, which characterises the fully acquired self-knowledge of the intellect (pp. 81–82); (4) finally, the three tasks connected to the development of reflection imply: (a) in connection to the birth of critical thought, the conflict between *Selbstdenken* and *Tradition*; (b) in connection to the creation of abstractions, the distinction between physical, mathematical, and philosophical abstraction; and (c) in connection to the correct understanding of the meaning of abstractions, the distinction between *Mysticismus* and *gesunde Logik* (p. 82).

In the following, exhaustive comment that concludes the rest of this second *Abhandlung*, of particular significance are the observations on the dialectic between tradition, mysticism, and healthy abstraction (pp. 90–136), above all on the “conflict between healthy logic and mysticism”, which “accompanies us throughout the entire history of philosophy” (p. 95). For Fries, the genesis and essence of mysticism can be traced back to the erroneous use and understanding of the abstractive procedure, when “abstractions are attributed with the value of intuitions” (p. 91), to thus arrive at the point of affirming that the universal exists. This fundamental methodological error is added to the undue extension of the “philosophical metaphor”, that is to say of the symbolism natural to our understanding of the life of the spirit, transgressing the limitations prescribed by scientific knowledge: in this way, “the religious poetry of mythology becomes metaphysical reality, these poems become *mysterien*. In a religious doctrine of a mystical type, the higher secret doctrine is fulfilled”, and

this teaches man to rise above sensible knowledge (p. 101; here Fries specifically refers to *Symbolik*, a work which his colleague at Heidelberg, the mythologist Georg Friedrich Creuzer, was publishing in the same period [1810–1812]).

Equally committed are the concluding reflections (pp. 136–146) on the dialectic between intuition, deduction, and speculation. Unlike the other “stages” examined so far, this phase constitutes the true diachronic aspect of the history of philosophy, which is thus articulated according to the sequence of “periods” or “epochs” marked by the prevalence of one or the other of the three forms. Each of these main periods, intuitive, inductive, or speculative, constitutes one of the three methodological courses, giving rise to minor cycles, so that, for example, in the “period of induction there was *intuitive induction*, *inductory induction* and, finally, *speculative induction*”. However, in this way we have come to touch on the theme of the “periodisation” of the history of philosophy, for which Fries wishes to provide a framework and which he does more fully in the third *Abhandlung* devoted to the “proofs taken from the history of philosophy” (pp. 147–191). This framework, extended to a historical design, constitutes the basis for the later *Geschichte der Philosophie*, and we shall therefore deal with Fries’ periodisation when analysing this work.

Fries’ theoretical positions can be viewed within the lively debate on the epistemological statute of the history of philosophy, which began in Germany in the last decade of the eighteenth century in the bosom of the Kantian school, and continued in the early decades of the new century with contributions from the various idealist schools. In Fries’ approach it is easy to recognise the task presented to the new generation of historians and theorists by the criticism, to carry out a transcendental analysis of experience which, extended to the specific domain of the history of thought, becomes a problem of a “philosophical history of philosophy”, capable of presenting the “facts of reason” not by deducing them from a mere “historical narration” (*Geschichtserzählung*) but by taking them from the “nature of human reason”, much like a “philosophical archeology”. In brief, what Kant had set down in the form of cautious reflection on “scattered sheets” of notes (see above, pp. 752–765) now became an explicit theoretical intention and a historiographical work in progress: the “construction” of a history of philosophy in a strong sense, where the meaning, indeed the “necessity”, of development, were deduced *a priori* from the categories of speculative reason. However, if from a certain point of view Fries’ conception can be seen within a “constructivist” tendency that was to develop into the Hegelian identification of ‘history’ and ‘system’, this does not mean that we can neglect the differences that emerge from the common programme, which make it possible, in Fries’ case, to weigh up the originality of his reformulation of Kantian criticism in the field of historiography. We must stress that Fries was fully aware of this originality, as is demonstrated by the acute observations with which, in the ‘Vorrede’ to his *Geschichte der Philosophie* (I, pp. III–XXII), he attempted to characterise its particularity when compared to the more significant historiographical production of his time.

“Old” Brucker and the more modern Tennemann are dismissed in a few short comments: the former is reproached for the lack of a “comprehensive design of



development” and for the mistake of “including everything according to his Wolffian perspective”; Fries concedes that Tennemann has “a very appropriate view of the general development” but objects that there is a “lack of understanding as far as the history of dialectics is concerned, particularly for the Greek age”, and also that he repeated Brucker’s error of wishing “to order ancient doctrines within the framework of modern abstractions and problematics”. His comparison with other exponents of the historiography of philosophy of the early nineteenth century is fuller: first of all with the Frenchman Joseph-Marie Degérando, whose *Histoire comparée des systèmes de philosophie* must have aroused Fries’ interest in its intention to assume the “development of the doctrine of human knowledge” as the main thread of its research. However, the categorial approach was different, and therefore Fries failed to agree with Degérando’s “philosophy of experience”, which could not but lead to even more evident evaluative disagreements as far as more recent developments were concerned (‘Vorrede’, p. XII).

The dispute with Schleiermacher and his school is particularly long (pp. VI–IX): while graciously acknowledging the stature of his opponent, there could not but be a clear disagreement between the two conceptions of history, the critical-transcendental one (Fries) and the hermeneutic one based on *Einfühlung* (Schleiermacher) since so many aspects of their understanding of history were different, albeit not completely different. From the point of view of critical philosophy, Schleiermacher’s principle of learning “to think in reciprocal accord” (p. VII), “this *veniam damus petimusque vicissim*”, may certainly be valid for the urbanity of social relationships; applied, however, to the strict domain of science, it involves attributing philosophy with “a proteiform nature of such a kind that it can never be grasped securely as it appears to be continually changing”. In the face of the relativism evoked by Schleiermacher’s hermeneutic school, Fries calls for three rules of method, demanding in the first place the subordination of historical to theoretical awareness, which then becomes particularly necessary in order to grasp the sense of development. On the other hand (and this is the third rule), “a master of a past age should never be considered as if he had already thought with our dialectics; it is not admissible to expound his doctrine according to our system, even less to present it together with the consequences we have drawn from it” (p. IX).

The first two criteria, which are summed up in the reiterated primacy of speculation, set Fries against those whom he defines as “two of our most valid historians of philosophy”: Ernst Reinhold and Heinrich Ritter, who “maintain that in order to respect impartiality (*Unpartheilichkeit*) one must not judge according to one’s own system”. Impartiality, however, Fries replies, “requires only letting every master speak in his own way, without distortions, but then revealing, according to the general law of development, his onesidedness and his errors”. Fries’ verdict on Reinhold is less severe, “since his exposition, more tasteful (*geschmackvoller*) than that of those who came before him, has the aim of being a narrative for the wider public, and he insists less on the evolutionary aspect and on criticism”. To the contrary, his disagreement with the “learned and astute” Ritter is greater, as the latter “sets out to follow the course of history itself with greater rigour but in doing

so he already supposes, in the oldest doctrines, distinctions proper to our modern dialectics and, therefore, partly attributes to them consequences that belong solely to modern dialectics" (p. X).

Fries' most profound and intense disagreement on the level of the polemic is reserved for Hegel's concept of historiography. As is natural, the acrimony exacerbated by years of scientific and academic rivalry prevented Fries from suitably considering at any length the undeniable affinities between his own conception and that of Hegel. Yet Fries' critical lucidity manages to capture the essence in a few words: "I thus find myself in the strangest relationship with Hegel. In the 'Introduction' to his *Lessons on the History of Philosophy* edited by Michelet [1833–1836], Hegel also clarifies its meaning in the very same way as I did twenty-six years ago in the *Heidelberger Studien* of 1810 [in reality 1811: see above, p. 929]. The history of philosophy is the development of the self-knowledge of the intellect (*die Entwicklung der Selbsterkenntnis des Verstandes*)" (p. XII). However, as we have said, Fries' critical reflection concentrates mainly on the differences. In the first place, and fundamentally, these differences concern the conception of the intellect, which for Fries is "the human intellect (*Menschenverstand*) that gradually develops in the social life of thinkers, while Hegel has in mind the spirit of the world (*Weltgeist*) that one slowly becomes aware of" (p. XII). This ontologisation of the intellect in turn involves in Hegel the abolition of any gap between the logical-ideal development of reflected knowledge and the real development of history, according to "the fatal axiom that what is real is rational". While, therefore, in the criticist conception, thanks to that gap, "one can never predict when and where a new step will be reached for real progress in history", in the Hegelian conception there reigns "a superstition of necessity" (*Nothwendigkeitsaberglaube*) aggravated by a "clumsy discourse" that "does not manage to decide on what is necessary and what is contingent in history" (pp. XIII–XVI).

Indeed, Fries further asserts, divergences in the historical narrative are the outcome of a different conception of the development of reflected knowledge. In fact, Hegel "completely ignores psychological distinctions and leads them back to those empty and ontological between in-itself, for-itself, and in-itself and for-itself", which are then loaded with a theological meaning. Thus any difference between philosophy and a broader conception of life and the world, based on the reflected, critical nature of the former, is lost, giving way to a fatalism that "transforms the law of human rational activity into a principle of the existence of things, and the whole of philosophy into the fable of how the divinity is subjugated to a destiny of the knowledge of the self, of how it had to create the world in order to attain gradual self-consciousness" (pp. XVIII–XX). In conclusion, in opposition to these "fantasies", Fries puts forward his own theory of the history of philosophy as the development of conceptual abstractions, as the elaboration and critical-reflective comprehension of the conception of reality. The criterion of historical evaluation cannot but be provided by the systematic idea of philosophy, and here Fries, the loyal disciple, re-evokes Kantian criticism and its "principle of the immanence of human knowledge", according to which "it is possible to distinguish easily every mythological fantasy and every empty physical and hyperphysical hypothesis

from truly scientific metaphysical knowledge and hence expound the authentically philosophical evolutionary process of thoughts in the very history of philosophy” (p. XXII).

### 11.3.4 *Die Geschichte der Philosophie*

**11.3.4.1** The work *Die Geschichte der Philosophie, dargestellt nach den Fortschritten ihrer wissenschaftlichen Entwicklung* (Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1837–1840) consists of two in octavo volumes, of XXIV–556 and XXXII–734 pages respectively. In the ‘Vorrede’ to the first volume (pp. III–XXIII) and the lengthy ‘Einleitung’ (I, pp. 1–72), subdivided into four chapters, Fries summarises his own theory of the historiography of philosophy. The last chapter of the ‘Einleitung’ (‘Eintheilung der Geschichte der Philosophie’, pp. 67–72) schematically presents the general subdivision of the history of philosophy, hence the plan of the work. It is divided into three parts, subdivided in turn into sections and chapters, within which the paragraphs are numbered in order (109 in all).

The first part takes up the whole of the first volume and deals with ‘Die Geschichte der Philosophie bei den Griechen von Hesiodos bis zum Paulus dem Apostel’, subdivided into three sections, or *Abtheilungen*: the first (‘Von den Anfängen wissenschaftlicher Philosophie bei den Griechen bis auf Sokrates’, pp. 76–248) describes the beginnings and development of Greek philosophy from Hesiodos to the Sophists in four chapters; the second (‘Sokrates und die Sokratiker’, pp. 249–455) presents Socrates, the Socratic schools, Plato and Aristotle in another four chapters; finally, the third (‘Die Geschichte der griechischen Philosophenschulen bis zur Verbindung der orientalischen Lehren mit den griechischen besonders zu Alexandria’, pp. 456–556) is devoted, again in four chapters, to the development of the Academy and the Peripatus, the school of Epicurus, Stoicism, and Scepticism.

The second volume opens with a ‘Vorrede’ (pp. III–XXVI), where Fries rethinks the essential traits of the history of philosophy which, in being the “history of the Greek spirit” (p. IV), is distinct from the history of human culture and civilisation. This is followed by the other two parts. The second deals with ‘Die Geschichte der Philosophie vom Anfang der christlichen Lehre bis zur Erfindung der Methoden der Erfahrungswissenschaften oder vom Paulus dem Apostel bis auf Galileo Galilei und Bacon von Verulam’ (pp. 1–260), in two sections: the first (‘Neoplatonismus, Judenthum und Christenthum’, pp. 3–162) explains Neoplatonism, Gnosticism and the philosophical elements in Christian doctrine in four chapters; the second (‘Mystiker und Scholastiker, oder die Philosophie in den Mönchsschulen der katholischen Kirche’, pp. 163–260) embraces, once again in four chapters, medieval philosophy and the period of Humanism and the Renaissance. Finally, the third part deals with ‘Die Geschichte der Philosophie von der Erfindung der Methode der Erfahrungswissenschaften bis zur Auffindung der Prinzipien aller metaphysischen Erkenntnisse, oder von Bacon von Verulam und Galileo Galilei bis auf Kant’ (pp. 261–734) and is divided into four sections and a concluding appendix. The first

section ('Galilei, Franz Bacon, Descartes', pp. 267–309), which is preceded by a brief introduction on the trends in modern thought (pp. 263–267), has no chapters. The second section ('Die Geschichte der speculativen Philosophie von Descartes bis auf Kant', pp. 310–435) examines in two chapters the development of rationalism and empiricism up to Kant. The third ('Geschichte der praktischen Philosophie', pp. 436–492), with no chapters, studies ethical, aesthetic, and political thought in the modern age. The fourth ('Immanuel Kant und unsere Zeit. Die Auffindung der Prinzipien aller metaphysischen Erkenntnisse', pp. 493–632) is dedicated to Kantian thought (Chap. 1) and the Friesian reform of criticism (Chap. 2). Finally, the appendix ('Polemische Bemerkungen über neuere grosse Rückschritte', pp. 633–734) expresses Fries' prevalently polemical evaluation of contemporary German philosophy, and in conclusion repropose a return to the genuine Kantian method ('Das Ende der Geschichte der Philosophie', pp. 715–734).

**11.3.4.2** In a 'constructive' conception such as that of Fries, the periodisation of the history of philosophy derives not from chronological criteria or in an empirical way, but from a theory of the ideal development of the spirit and its faculties which, as we saw, assumes as a diachronic principle the dialectic of *Intuition*, *Induktion*, and *Spekulation*. In presenting Fries' periodisation, therefore, we shall compare the third *Abhandlung* of 1811 with the effective articulation of the *Geschichte der Philosophie*.

The history of philosophy from Hesiodos to the Apostle Paul (the first great period) follows the rhythm of the gradual elevation of thought through the three phases of intuition, induction, and speculation. In the *Abhandlung*, Oriental philosophy, characterised by its links with tradition and authority, corresponds to the intuitive period; however, since philosophy is precisely free critical thought (*freies Selbstdenken*), treatment in the *Geschichte* begins with Greek thought as that is thought in which independence of spirit is manifested for the first time. Moreover, since the period of intuition is followed by that of induction, that is to say the gradual ascent from the particular to the universal, so the history of Greek philosophy is the history of "inductive philosophy", which comprises an intuitive, an inductive, and a speculative phase. The period of "intuitive induction" is represented by "physical abstractions", that is by Hesiodos' speculation and cosmogony, by Thales' "cosmophysics", and by the Ionic school. In the "inductive induction" phase, physical abstractions are replaced by the mathematical abstractions of the school of Pythagoras, then the first developments of philosophical abstractions by the Eleatic school, to which the discovery of the dialectic method is attributed. With Socrates this method, referred to ethical problems, acquires an autonomous meaning, and in his disciples Plato and Aristotle inductive and "epagodic" philosophy reaches its apogee by means of the full elaboration of philosophical abstractions. Thus, Greek philosophy enters its third and final phase, that of "speculative induction", dominated by the search for the criteria or foundations of truth (Scepticism, Stoicism, and Epicureanism).

The need for the immediate, divine revelation of truth, which appears as a result of the conflicts between the post-Aristotelian schools, opens the period of "speculative" or Christian philosophy, which embraces the history of thought up

until the contemporary age. The dialectic of intuition, induction, and speculation also reappears in “speculative philosophy”. Here the intuitive stage, “intuitive speculation”, is represented, on the one hand, by Hebrew and pagan Neoplatonism, and, on the other, by the original evangelical doctrine: common to both is the appeal for an immediate revelation of truth, superior to any discursive knowledge. The languishing of the philosophical spirit and the gradual clericalisation of Christian doctrine characterise the transition to the long medieval period, marked first by the mysticism of the “monks’ philosophy”. The phase of Scholasticism proper in the philosophy of the Middle Ages, which abandoned mystic intuitionism and revived Aristotelian doctrines (albeit in a unilateral and “epistemic”, or logical-dogmatic, way), marks the transition to “inductive speculation”, which was to become fully established in the philosophical and scientific thought of the modern age, from Bacon and Galileo to immediately before Kant. The inductive phase of speculation is, however, marked by the well-known conflict between empiricism and rationalism, destined to develop into Hume’s scepticism. With this, the circle of all unilateral attempts of the intellect to arrive at philosophy “was finally closed [ . . . ], and in this way it was forced to turn to totally subjective speculation, moving into the period of ‘speculative speculation’” (*Abhandlung III: ‘Belege’*, p. 185).

In turn, the three phases are found again in “speculative speculation”, represented here by the different levels of the concept of subjectivity. The “intuitive” period of the Scottish philosophy of common sense is replaced by the “inductive” period of Kantian criticism, Fries’ reform of which constitutes the “speculative” phase, the ideal or “philosophical” conclusion to the history of philosophy. It is clear, therefore, that any later “empirical” manifestation of philosophising will only mean a “regression”, in the extent to which it will claim to surpass this definitive position. This is precisely Fries’ attitude towards the more recent developments in post-Kantian, particularly idealist, philosophy in Germany: thus, in the appendix which concludes the *Geschichte*, the threefold, ascendent rhythm of *Intuition*, *Induktion*, and *Spekulation*, breaks off to give rise to a series of polemical considerations concerning the relapse of the various protagonists of contemporary philosophy into pre-Kantian dogmatism and scepticism.

There remains one final comment to be made about Fries’ periodisation. Despite its constructive, *a priori* nature, the schematic aspect, so to speak, is mitigated in the transition from the *Abhandlungen* of 1811 to the *Geschichte der Philosophie*: here it comes closer to the more traditional periodisation, so that the great historical epochs together define the same fundamental periods as the ideal dialectic of the spirit, combining the theoretical aspect with the more precisely historical and empirical. This is true, for example, of the distinction between classical Greek philosophy and the Christian approach to it, which coincides with that between “inductive philosophy” and “speculative philosophy”. In its turn, in the second volume, the speculative-inductive stage does indeed embrace in a single unit Scholastic and Renaissance and modern thought up to Kant, but these two phases are acknowledged as having their own specific features which require treatment in two separate parts: all things considered, the traditional break between the two cycles of thought is therefore revived.

**11.3.4.3** For Fries, therefore, the beginning of the history of philosophy coincides, in Kantian fashion, with the first manifestations of Greek thought. The theocratic nature inherent in Asian peoples “does not in itself provide a task for the true history of philosophy” (*Geschichte*, I, p. 75). Undoubtedly, even in Greece, philosophy “developed out of the poetic vision of mythology and of the collection of moral maxims”, so that we are entitled to question “whether in these early developments of reflection the Greek spirit enjoyed a life of its own or only lived off an assimilation of extraneous traditions” (I, p. 76). The question must be examined in historical terms, that is, on the basis of the documents we have, not on fanciful hypotheses claiming that it derived from all the ancient knowledge of India or Egypt, as the “dreamers” of the new Romantic school maintain. When tackling the problematic nature of the sources, Fries indeed states that it is necessary to base oneself “solely on the laws of critical thinking (*Selbstdenken*)”. According to these laws, he sees in Greece “a young, healthy, and strong spirit finding a form and independent support for itself”: however, “it would be highly unlikely that an accidental mosaic of extraneous ideas might have managed to paint such a picture of ‘one’ healthy life”.

Having thus retraced the beginnings of philosophy to the outset of Greek philosophy, Fries tackles the latter by referring to the more general framework of reference of Greek culture and civilisation towards the end of the sixth century B.C., rather than to Thales: that is to say, to the age of the consolidation of the civil institutions of the *polis* and the first flowering of literary and scientific activity, testified to by the tradition of the Seven Sages. In this framework, the exposition takes concrete shape with the poems of the Homeric and Hesiodic tradition (I, pp. 81–95), where the theogonic and cosmogonic tales are treated at length since it is in them that we can grasp the first appearances of “Greek mythical philosophy”. The “cosmophysical foundations” of Greek thought are then explained in their dual development in the first Ionic school (Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes: I, pp. 95–115) and in the Doric-Italic school (Pythagoras on the one hand, Xenophanes and the Eleatics on the other: I, pp. 115–175). It is with the Eleatics that physical and mathematical abstraction is united to philosophical abstraction, represented by the intuition “of the unchanging unity of the being that is all”. Hence, reflecting on the difference between the phenomenon and the being itself, thought begins to develop in a dialectic sense: “Zeno of Elea is the first dialectic, the rhetoric of the Sophists seeks the topic and deals with fallacious reasoning, the correction of which leads Socrates to logic, the first to concern himself with it” (I, p. 152). Socrates’ teaching (I, pp. 249–262) concerns essentially two points: practical philosophy and the reform of dialectics. Starting with the latter, Fries highlights its originality not so much in the adoption of the “catechetic method” as, like Aristotle (*Metaph.* XIII, 4), in the use of induction and the definition of concepts. As far as practical philosophy is concerned, while acknowledging with the Stagirite the limitations of Socrates’ intellectualism, Fries points out its merits in a double comparison with the “physiologists” and the Sophists: “He subordinated the divine σοφία of the ancient masters to the practical knowledge of beauty and good, which can be acquired only

in the inner knowledge of the self, and he set the seriousness of the ideals of this knowledge against the frivolity of the Sophists" (I, p. 256).

The chapters on Plato and Aristotle are very extensive and detailed because with them "epagogic philosophy reaches its apogee and the invention of philosophical abstractions its maturity" (I, p. 68). The chapter on Plato (I, pp. 286–374) opens with an interpretative proposal: "I shall attempt to demonstrate that Plato was a genuine, faithful follower of Socrates [ . . . ]: the aim of human teaching and the sum of human knowledge was for him solely practical philosophy. He raised practical philosophy and Socrates' dialectics to further perfection, and in this work his principal merit remains the development of dialectics" (I, pp. 288–289). Plato was in fact the first to discover the true meaning of logical forms in universal concepts, even if he did not then know how to distinguish them from "dialectic metaphysical forms": thanks to this error he was led to attribute truth only to necessary knowledge, rejecting all knowledge of individual reality as pertaining to human sensibility. Yet, "in the application of this discovery he remained fundamentally faithful to Socratic induction: he always led thought from life towards science, sought its subordination to principles starting from life and never placed the principle at the top in a speculative manner in order then to derive his doctrine from it". For Fries Plato's Socratism can also be seen in his conception of physics and ethical and religious problems: in declaring that the scientific knowledge of the final nature of things is unattainable for man, "all his methods of physical representation belong to the δόξα and [ . . . ] those of a philosophical-religious type have only an imaginative nature, always prey to εἰκασίᾱ".

This is a portrait of Plato, therefore, with light and shadow, which still bears the traits of a Kantian-Enlightenment interpretation, that is to say, an ambivalent judgement. Indeed, Plato's principal merit remains for Fries his "recognition of the world of the spirit as the only eternally true world", so that in this sense Platonic dualism is likened to the Kantian doctrine of transcendental idealism, which teaches the distinction between phenomenon and noumenon (I, pp. 293 and 295). On the other hand, the difference is also pointed out: while criticist dualism concerns the contrast between the incompleteness of natural knowledge and the ideas of perfection and the absolute, Plato's dualism is based on the opposition between the changeability of sensible knowledge and unchanging, necessary knowledge, the object proper to the spirit. In other words, Plato made the error of identifying the predicate, the universal, with supreme reality, thus also exchanging the copulative meaning of ἐστὶ with its existential meaning: this confusion brings with it "the confusion between logical and metaphysical forms, an error that provoked Aristotle's disagreement with Plato" (I, p. 369). Certainly, according to Fries, the Platonic doctrine of ideas cannot be interpreted immediately (and grossly!) as a mere hypostasization of concepts since the philosopher distinguishes between ideas (the true object of the θεῖα θεωρία, to which the soul also belongs) and concepts (εἶδη), which constitute only the imperfect tool of human knowledge (I, p. 359). Yet this correct distinction between the suprasensible and the way it is known is

clouded, so to speak, by the above-mentioned errors, which open the door to that “logical mysticism” (I, p. 370) destined for uncontrolled development in the later period of Neoplatonism.

The subsequent chapter on Aristotle (I, pp. 391–455) is not as long, but it is still considerably extensive. Aristotle is called “the great orderer of philosophical disciplines since he did not restrict himself to practising dialectics but also discovered, ordered, and applied most of its laws” (I, p. 392). Fries’ overall picture of the Stagirite also presents its clearly defined areas of light and shadow, accentuated by the difficulty of imagining a unitary interpretation, due to the inductive method of reasoning which breaks up his thought into scattered observations. Besides the encyclopedic nature and the work of conceptual clarification, what is highlighted, however, is the substantial affinity between Aristotle and Plato’s conception of reality, determined by the underlying metaphysical theory “that everything that is is properly spirit” (I, p. 400). However, for Fries too, the peculiarity of Aristotle’s theoretical position is still defined by his logical and metaphysical revision of the Platonic doctrine of ideas, a revision that does indeed correct Plato’s conceptual realism yet at the same time alters its profound message: “Therefore, Aristotle dropped the Platonic elevation of the eternal truth of the world of the spirit above that of space, losing the merits of Pythagorean-Platonic symbolism concerning metempsychosis and the harmony of the spheres, and even more, in general, the splendour of the representation of the autonomy of the world of the spirit hierarchically subordinated to the idea of good. The cosmic sphere became once again for him the true essence of things themselves, thus creating a conception of reality that was again inspired by the old schemes of the Ionic school” (I, p. 399).

For Fries, the Kantian, the accusation of cosmologism is coupled with a reservation about the fundamental aporia in Aristotle’s concept of science: a theory of νοῦς as a faculty of principles is accompanied by a conflicting theory of induction that completely ignores the speculative in favour of the empirical aspect. In Kantian fashion, Fries sees in the Aristotelian method not so much “true empiricism” as a “logical dogmatism”, which “with its unilateralism has imprisoned thought for millennia” (I, pp. 404 and 406). This lack of appreciation for Aristotelian “dogmatism” is hence reflected in Fries’ interpretation of the Stagirite’s ontology, which is dismantled and subdivided into physics and the philosophy of religion: the books on metaphysics, no less than those on physics, have as their aim “the doctrine of divinity” (I, p. 415), but such a doctrine, precisely thanks to its cosmological features (in its “identification of the life of the spirit with a circular movement”) remains for Fries “an arid, unsatisfactory conception” (I, p. 432). On the other hand, “the best parts in Aristotle’s works are those in which he deals with practical philosophy: ethics, politics, and rhetoric” (I, p. 438). Here the method of “arid conceptual analysis” is compensated by the continual attention paid to experience, creating a more favourable area for psychological enquiry. Even these aspects are, however, criticised: thus in the doctrine of virtue Fries complains of the lack of a religious idea and, more generally, of a recognition of the independence of the spirit, which is founded on the idea of the dignity of the person (I, p. 449), while Aristotle’s political theory, despite providing the Western tradition with “extremely



important foundations” (such as the doctrine of common good, the various forms of constitution, and the distinction between the powers: I, p. 455), ignored the ideas of civil and personal liberty, proposing, certainly in accordance with the feelings shared by the Greeks, too rigid a separation between freemen and slaves and between economic activity and culture.

After Plato and Aristotle, the “masters of millennia”, Greek philosophy witnessed a decline in originality, in spite of the variety of its expressions. According to Fries, Scepticism (rather than Epicureanism or Stoicism) is the most significant post-Aristotelian orientation: in its twofold criticism of both sensible and intellectual certainty, it presents itself as a moment “resolving” the previous dogmatic aspects of Greek thought (I, p. 525) and paves the way for the need for an “immediate knowledge of reason” beyond the empty reflection of the intellect, a need expressed, on the one hand, by Neopythagorean and Neoplatonic philosophy and, on the other, by Christian doctrine. On the level of *Weltansicht* (that is, of a more general view of the world) the ideas disseminated by the Apostle Paul now dominate, “the ideas of religious faith, that is of sin, of predestination and of redemption, in addition to the doctrines of love” (II, p. 4). On the more specifically philosophical level of *Dialektik*, Fries’ analysis concentrates on Neoplatonism, characterised by eclecticism, the synthesis of Platonism and Aristotelianism, and orientalism. When faced with the decisive question of whether Neoplatonism originated in some presumed, pre-existent Oriental philosophy, his answer is negative, in accordance with the historiography of Kantian inspiration: it is only “the natural consequence of the epistematic transformation of the Platonic doctrine of ideas”, its degeneration into an “arbitrary game of metaphysical hypotheses and mythological metaphysics” (II, pp. 20–21). However, the ferment of the new Romantic, idealist times can be sensed in an attempt to shed light on the complex world of Oriental religious representations which lent themes and images to Greek thought: thus there is a chapter on gnosticism, which extends to the examination of “Chinese doctrines”, the “Buddhists”, and “philosophy in Sanskrit literature” (II, pp. 79–119).

The chapters dedicated to the development of medieval Christian thought, which represents the corruption of the original evangelical message, centred on the “great, pure idea” of the “worship of God only in spirit and in truth” (II, p. 121), can, not surprisingly, be placed in the traditional framework of an Enlightenment Protestant judgement. If the evolution of Patristics reveals that faith was becoming increasingly rigid in the intolerant affirmation “of the one and only saving Church as a reign of priests, to whom the means for eternal salvation are exclusively entrusted” (II, p. 161), the early Middle Ages were characterised by mysticism or the “Christian Neoplatonism” of “monastic philosophy”, while Scholastic philosophy at its height was nothing but “the epistemic transformation” of Aristotle’s inductive philosophy, with which Christian theology made a peace that was “easily made and easily kept” (II, p. 221). One final chapter (II, pp. 230–260) examines the dissolution of Scholasticism, the advent of Humanism, and Renaissance philosophy: in this brief, conventional review, of some interest are the pages devoted to *Naturphilosophen*, where in a tone of polemic against the Romantic Schellingian attitude, Fries distinguishes the “clear philosophers of nature in the simple manner of the ancient

Greeks" (Cusanus, Bruno, Telesio, and Campanella) from the alchemist theosophs (Paracelsus, the two van Helmont, Fludd, and Böhme), who were nothing but "eccentrics (*Sonderlinge*) endowed with knowledge and imagination" (II, p. 252).

We now come to philosophy from Bacon to Kant, characterised by the development of empiricist and rationalist-mathematical tendencies. Fries sees two results of the history of their interweave and opposition, accompanied by the multiform phenomenon of scepticism (from Montaigne to Hume): as far as *Dialektik* is concerned, the elaboration of a theory of reason that integrates the advantages of empiricism and rationalism, suppressing their one-sidedness; as for the *Weltansicht*, the resolution of the "great conflict between knowledge and faith", eliminating on one hand the theological-metaphysical hypotheses conditioning science, and, on the other, freeing religious faith from the bonds of the dogmatic-authoritarian tradition (II, pp. 263–266). Within this general framework of clearly Enlightenment, Kantian design, the figure of Descartes is presented in a wealth of contrasts (II, pp. 283–303). On the one hand, he perfects the modern mathematical conception of nature initiated by Galileo; on the other, he is the father of dogmatic rationalism thanks to the theological and metaphysical presuppositions with which he burdened science. The critical judgement links Cartesian philosophy to a further development in modern thought: for Fries, Descartes' historical and theoretical importance lies not so much in the elaboration of a new doctrine as in his capacity to arouse "new forces, sweeping away obstacles and posing great problems so clearly in such a lively manner" (II, p. 299). Hence, with Descartes we are brought to the beginning of the "clear, scientific development of the new philosophy [. . .]. Descartes takes over, so to speak, from Aristotle: although his affirmations are not respected to the letter as if they were the laws of truth, later thinkers still consider his presuppositions valid and maintain his distinctions" (II, pp. 302–303).

As far as Spinoza's philosophy is concerned, the overall judgement is rather severe: as a good Kantian, Fries refuses to see in his *Ethics* the highest and most consequential expression of metaphysical speculation (see Jacobi and the idealists), and indeed takes great care to analyse in detail the definitions and axioms of the first book in order to demonstrate their incoherence. Having dismantled the mechanism, he then deals with Spinoza's *Weltansicht* and *Dialektik*: if the former is not the outcome of demonstrations but is already pre-contained "in an arbitrary imagination like the the Neoplatonic imagination" (II, p. 332), the latter is nothing but the degeneration of the Cartesian *Dialektik*; any distinction between contingency and necessity disappears in the "most rigid logical dogmatism", while there remains the error common to the entire Cartesian school, of thinking of "the divinity as the supreme principle of scientific explanation" (II, pp. 324 and 341).

As far as Leibniz and Newton are concerned, Fries' preference lies with the latter. The German thinker, endowed with a more versatile, yet more rhapsodic, mind and culture, "remained far inferior to his rival in mathematical physics" (II, p. 358), in his inability to separate physics from metaphysics, and to maintain a clear distinction between the physical and spiritual planes. For these reasons, Leibnizian monadology cannot but seem to Fries a "hyperphysical fantasy", representing the completion of Spinoza's philosophy but also the revival of the "logical dogmatism"

of the Scholastics (II, p. 364). His verdict on the *New Essays on the Human Intellect* is quite different: they “contain the foundations for the theory of reason on which Kant was able to construct so successfully his further developments” (II, p. 377), that is to say, the recognition of the intellectual *a priori* as a corrective to Locke’s sensational empiricism. Fries presents Newton’s philosophy as a synthesis of the legacy of Descartes and Bacon, aiming to anticipate criticism with its preliminary analysis of the cognitive faculties: despite its incongruities, this “logic applied to defend the methods of the experimental sciences” disseminated rapidly thanks to its clarity, ease of comprehension, and faith in the strength of reason in the face of any type of authoritarianism. Its limitations become clear on the speculative plane as the limitations of sensationalism itself, wavering after Locke between a probabilism tinged with scepticism and a self-sufficient naturalism (II, pp. 401 and 402).

In this polemical, confused landscape, Hume’s “exceptionally calm and clear” thought stands out. His merit consists of having elaborating a scepticism that comes to suppress itself in its very position, revealing, through the admission of an instinct of immediate knowledge (*belief*), “its lack of validity for the human spirit” (II, p. 420). Despite its errors, Hume’s famous theory of induction represents “the best and most important part” of his research since it constitutes a prelude to the psychological enquiry into transcendental functions that Fries had intended to elaborate in his reform of criticism. In any case, Fries’ overall judgement remains the ‘canonical’ one from the Kantian point of view: Hume’s sensationalist empiricism, and more generally that of the natural sciences, still remains the preferable alternative to rationalist dogmatism before the arrival of the transcendental understanding of criticism (II, p. 426).

The treatment of Kant’s thought (II, pp. 493–632) opens with a general assessment of its significance in the history of western philosophy and its relationship to the German Enlightenment. Comparable only to Plato and Aristotle in his originality and extensive outlook, the philosopher from Königsberg elaborated the most comprehensive and lucid synthesis of the manifold expressions of the German culture of his time, nurtured by the legacy of Leibniz and Wolff but also open to stimulation from French and English thought. On a specifically speculative level, Fries highlights two points: transcendental idealism and the metaphysics of customs, that is to say, “the scientifically rigorous distinction between finite and eternal truth”, and “the recognition of the sacred need for good in itself” (II, p. 498). He insists in particular, and extensively, on explaining the historical and theoretical meaning of transcendental idealism, which “marks the end of the entire history of speculative metaphysics” (II, p. 499). On the one hand, it is the philosophical elaboration of the Pauline doctrine of the subordination of science to faith; on the other it represents the theoretical settlement of the tension between *Wissen* and *Glaube* that constitutes the inextricable knot of modern thought. The exposition properly speaking begins with a list of Kant’s “great discoveries” in the theoretical field (II, pp. 502–522): (1) the distinction between analytical necessity and synthetic necessity; (2) within the latter, the distinction between mathematics and metaphysics; (3) the discovery of the guidelines for the systematic construction of the table of categories; (4) the transcendental foundation of our objective knowledge according to the principles

of *Naturlehre*, through the doctrine of schematicism; and (5) the transcendental ideas of the absolute, generated by the need for the unconditioned in contrast to the finite nature of experience. The exposition then continues with the presentation of Kant's critical edifice (II, pp. 522–546), which is mainly dedicated to the first *Critique*. Here Fries' critical objection to his master's doctrine becomes apparent: basically, it can be summed up in his having provided a theory of the noumenon in an exclusively problematic, negative key, thus denying to supreme principles of reason that synthetic objectivity that Kant, on the contrary, attributed to the principles of the intellect.

The exposition of Kant's thought concludes with a 'Doktrinale Darstellung der Philosophie' (II, pp. 546–573) which, after a brief description of the complex relationship between transcendental philosophy, criticism, and the system, examines the two sides to Kantian metaphysics: the metaphysics of nature and the metaphysics of customs. The former is praised for having provided "a complete philosophical foundation of Newton's physics" (II, p. 550), even though it ignored the extension of morphological research to the heavenly constellations, the phenomena of crystallisation, and organic formations. The review of practical metaphysics is more extensive, and there are critical observations here too, for example on Kant's polemic against eudemonism, out of place with respect to the classical exaltation of the "pure value of virtue", and in contradiction with the fundamental practical postulate of a synthesis between happiness and virtue (II, pp. 556–557). Fries has even stronger reservations about the philosophy of religion, which places the foundations of faith in the mediation of proofs instead of the immediate conviction of reason, and ventures into a rationalist hermeneutics of the Christian tradition that underestimates, on the one hand, the rights of life and the feeling of religious experience and, on the other, "leads Kant into the problematic attempt to interpret religious poems in a scientific, philosophical sense", thus opening the door to the Romantic idealistic exercises in the philosophy of mythology (II, pp. 561–573).

In the presentation of "Kant's School" that follows, Fries' critical and 'constructive' intent emerges more clearly. The outline opens with a "mention of the faults that remained in Kant's development of his doctrine". They are briefly: (1) the lack of a general unifying theory capable of overcoming the various dualisms, due to his adoption of "a dogmatic method of demonstration borrowed from Wolff" (II, p. 577), which reduces transcendental deduction to a series of "transcendental demonstrations", thus revealing its inadequacy in dealing with the problem of the absolute, which is hence confined to the practical sphere; (2) the foundations of transcendental idealism oscillate between a sceptical and a realistic position as far as the thing in itself is concerned, while the ideality of space and time is gained on the basis of their subjectivity instead of objective fact represented by the incompleteness of their representations; (3) as has already been pointed out, Kant's great assertion of the independence of practical reason, on the one hand, ignores the classical conquest of virtue as good in itself, and, on the other, because of its formalism, does not consider the value of the final aim of the human person; (4) finally, in the third *Critique*, at no point is there a synthesis between the logical and aesthetic representations of the aims of nature, which in any case is legitimated not for

physical reasons but by the need for an analogy with the spiritual life. Moving on then to the “correction of the faults in Kantian doctrine” (II, pp. 590–632), Fries asserts the need for an anthropological interpretation of criticism in contrast to Kant himself, who did not understand “the prevalently psychological nature of his transcendental philosophy” (II, p. 594); and he then develops his own programme for the reform of critical philosophy, the articulation of which we will omit here since the discourse moves from a historical, interpretative level to a theoretical, systematic one.

Of particular interest is the reconstruction of the developments of post-Kantian philosophy in Germany, which for Fries are nothing but “great forms of regression”, in the sense that they move away from the method and spirit of criticism. These forms of regression arise from a misunderstanding of the concept of transcendental philosophy, for which Kant himself is largely responsible, as he did not clearly distinguish between the psychological level of the criticism of reason and the metaphysical level of the system of pure, or *a priori*, philosophical knowledge, on which criticism is founded. The “bias of the transcendental” (*das Vorurtheil des transcendentalen*: II, p. 640) is precisely this confusion between “psychological and metaphysical abstractions”, which thus identifies transcendental with *a priori*, from which the very development of contemporary German philosophy in its essence is generated. The first stage in this erroneous development is constituted by Reinhold’s *Elementarphilosophie* and his “principle of consciousness” (II, pp. 642–644). Here the “bias” is revealed in the assumption of a general, indeterminate psychological fact (the concept of representation) as the supreme principle of metaphysical knowledge and, at the same time, the keystone of the *Subjekt-Objekt-Frage*. The one-sidedness of Reinhold’s stance gives rise, on the one hand, to the equally one-sided realism of Jacobi and the scepticism of Schulze-Aenesidemus, and, on the other, paves the way for the further deviations from criticism at the hands of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel.

The great systematic constructions of idealism are indeed characterised, for Fries, by the intensification of Reinhold’s intention to seek in consciousness a supreme principle from which all knowledge may be deduced, thus confusing once again psychology and metaphysics. However, since here the synthesis between subject and object is not linked to any concrete content of knowledge, speculative idealism is forced, on the one hand, to the abuse of “empty comparative formulas”, and, on the other, to “revive Platonic mythology” through the theologisation of the self and its processes (II, pp. 650–654). Fichte’s *Wissenschaftslehre*, therefore, is only “a sort of deduction from Kantian categories generated by positing and opposing the self” which, from a methodological point of view, merely constitutes an imitation of Reinhold’s theory of the faculty of representation. To the emptiness of formulas corresponds the self-contradictory nature of the deduction of the system, since the position of the contradiction in the first principle would require the existence of two principles superior to it: one from which the contradiction may be inferred, the other to remove it (II, pp. 660–662). Fries’ judgement on the later developments of Fichte’s thought seems to be even more negative; he deems them “fantasies” about the self-revelation of God in the world and a “mythological dream” about the history of mankind (II, p. 666).

The presentation of Schelling (II, pp. 667–671), in whom Fries sees a certain originality in his “great idea” of a philosophy of nature which presents itself as a unitary comprehension of the physical world as an organism, is, however, rather succinct and veined with irony. Here, too, Schelling “ruined everything since he did not recognise the rights of mathematical physics and gave himself over exclusively to fantasies deprived of all consistency”. Fries even becomes sarcastic when assessing the religious philosophy of the older Schelling, who became a “prophetic mystic” *à la* Böhme, who “fantasised about how God gradually developed from his foundations in suffering and in love” (II, pp. 669–670).

The “Paraclete”, the “Messiah of Knowledge” of such a prophet, is, of course, Hegel (II, pp. 671–702), who “followed Fichte and Schelling with little originality: in dialectics his guide is Fichte, in his conception of reality mainly Schelling”. Indeed for Fries the Hegelian conception of the world as the self-revelation of God is “only a repetition of Schelling’s absolute science”, while his logic is nothing if not “the crudest repetition of Fichtian and Schellingian errors”, with an abuse of comparative formulas instead of judgements and even with a return to Scholastic realism by means of the concept of the idea as universally concrete (II, pp. 672–673). Only Hegel’s Berlin *Vorlesungen* manage to save themselves from such a negative evaluation, which touches with little variation on the different parts of the Hegelian system: the *Vorlesungen* are indeed rich in historical and artistic culture but, from a philosophical point of view, centre on the sole theme of the development of the *Weltgeist* in the human spirit, and, from a historical point of view, do not lack erroneous judgements (II, pp. 676–679). For Fries, behind Hegel’s empty formulas we can see a revival of Schellingian Spinozism, which is merely the modern version of the Buddhist *nirvana* and the Scholastic *omnitudo realitatum*. The Schellingian-Hegelian doctrine of absolute identity is thus “nothing but a degenerate Leibnizian monadology, which has lost the personality of God and returned to Hesiod’s Chaos or, more precisely to Anaximander’ *apeiron*” (II, pp. 700–702).

In less harsh and sarcastic, but still negative tones, Fries’ polemical review closes with his examination of Herbart (II, pp. 702–715). It is true that Herbart did not abandon himself, like Schelling and Hegel, “to Neoplatonic fantasies of God’s self-revelation” (II, p. 702), and his speculation originates, in Kantian fashion, with the recognition of the immanence of human knowing and the structural role of mathematics in building knowledge. However, Fries’ judgement is still negative because in Herbart this Kantian element is spoilt by his imitation of the Fichtian method of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, to which, in the final analysis one can retrace the “method of relations” with its need to solve the alleged contradictions of the real; influenced by the Fichtian conception of the self as simple being, Herbart did not succeed in overcoming the antinomy between the simple and the continuous, lapsing in his metaphysics and psychology into a monadism of a Leibnizian kind, where the idea of the simple has a merely critical and limitative function at the service of knowledge.

The final reflections in the *Geschichte der Philosophie* are devoted to the theme of the “end of the history of philosophy” (II, pp. 715–734). The proud faith of the Kantian who possesses a speculative patrimony that does not rightfully permit any

further historical development is belied, even in Fries' eyes, by experience, that is to say, by the disputes that continued to arise in the varied landscape of contemporary German philosophy. Yet, with the optimism typical of a *Kantschüler*, Fries can foresee a solution to the aporia: it is necessary to bring the difficulties and deviant, or unilateral, solutions back to the foundations of the true critical method. In truth, the work ends in a minor key, with the hope that the critical-anthropological method may also grant a sound philosophical foundation to political economics, which after Hume had remained anchored to the method of empirical induction.

**11.3.4.4** We have already noticed the importance that theoretical and methodological reflection acquires in Fries' historiographical work. We now need to examine how his methodology works in the effective elaboration of his *Geschichte der Philosophie*: here it will be of interest to check, in the light of a number of parameters, the coherence or the discord of Friesian practical historiography with the relevant theories he had expounded. From the point of view of the general approach, the constructive speculative nature of the work clearly emerges, prevailing over the expository, historical, and philological aspect: the division into periods, tendencies, and figures is soundly guided by the dialectic triad of intuition, induction, and speculation, which is gradually reproduced in smaller circles as we draw closer to the contemporary age. In effect, this continual generation of new triadic developments of the synthesis that has just been attained closely resembles the spiralling of Hegelian dialectics (and Fries, as we have seen, was aware of this). In both cases it is the outcome of the Kantian concept of a "philosophical" history of philosophy in which the *a priori*, whether it is a psychological category (abstraction in Fries) or an ontological one (the Spirit in Hegel), dominates and controls the empirical plurality of history.

On the other hand, it is clear that for Fries it is not the onto-theological figure of the *Weltgeist* that is the guide to how the history of philosophy should be expounded but, more concretely, the *Menschengeist* or *Menschenverstand*, that is, the "human intellect that gradually develops in the social life of thinkers". Thus the dialectic development, along internal speculative lines, is counterbalanced in the *Geschichte der Philosophie* by the more extensive background of the socio-political and, in a broad sense, cultural or spiritual history with which philosophical history interacts and in which it finds its framework and limitations. Hence Fries's need to tie the periods and rhythms of his speculative articulation in with the more traditional periodisation of history: the introductory paragraphs that at times precede the treatment of a new age in the development of thought serve as this link. Thus, for example, the transition from the epagogic-inductive period to the epistematic-speculative period is at the same time the transition from Greek to Christian philosophy: at the beginning of the second volume, the 'Einleitung' dwells for a few paragraphs (§§ 107–110: pp. 3–24) on outlining not only the complex web of the many philosophical and religious traditions but also, and principally, the new political conditions and cultural institutions of the Roman Empire. The need to create these links is undoubtedly more frequently suggested than effectively carried out, and Fries willingly remains on the more general and generic terrain of the history of ideas and doctrines. Hence, in the 'Einleitung' (II, pp. 264–266) that

accompanies the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern age, it is pointless to look for a link with the above-mentioned pages on the transition from ancient to Christian times: here Fries restricts himself to pointing out that the new age is characterised on the plane of *Dialektik* by the elaboration of a theory of scientific reason in an empirical (Bacon) and a rationalist direction (Descartes), with an anti-Scholastic function, and on the plane of the world view (*Weltansicht*) by the conflict between knowledge and faith. In short, despite hinting at an anti-Idealist methodology, the construction along internal lines prevails.

The speculative constructive design also clearly dominates in the treatment of the philosophers. Bibliographical information is reduced to a minimum, and the narrative focuses not on an analysis of the works but on the problems. Generally speaking (and this is evident above all in the presentation of great figures such as Plato, Aristotle, and Kant), the author is introduced, after the necessary but succinct biographical preliminary, by one or two paragraphs aiming to capture the overall meaning of his thought. Then Fries considers their particular contributions as far as world view and philosophy in the strictest sense are concerned. These considerations are followed by a more detailed analysis of the systematic articulation (theory of knowledge, metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, etc.). The concluding observations reserved for the major figures usually highlight the aporetic aspects when they are not negative, thus referring readers to later developments, corrections, integrations or even degenerations and regressions (see, for example, the pages devoted to the errors of Plato and Platonism, or to the inadequacies of Kantian thought). In fact, as we have seen, for Fries, even with his ascendent dialectics, the history of philosophy is not a continual process: the diachronic of intuition, induction, and speculation is crossed and interrupted, or at least rendered problematic, by the eternal tension between mystic-dogmatic temptation and the critical requirements of reason. There is, therefore, no facile teleological optimism, despite the hermeneutic, criticist background, yet this very background, in the awareness of the tension between *Wissen* and *Glaube* (hence also of the legitimate plurality of perspectives of nature and man), leads Fries to keep his distance from another tendency common to historiographies of a speculative kind: that of wishing to confine the entire thought of a thinker in a formula and in a principle, from which the articulation of the system is to be deduced. In a thinker such as ours, however systematic he may be, it is the 'problem', not the 'system' that stands in the foreground.

Yet in the *Geschichte der Philosophie* the systematic concern is revealed in the always watchful evaluative attention that tests the theoretical consistency of the solutions proposed for the problems. It is true that the third general methodological rule proposed by Fries in the 'Vorrede' states that "a past master should never be considered as if he had already thought with our dialectics" (see above, p. 933). However, even stronger is his insistence, in the previous two rules, on the primacy of theoretical awareness as the measure of historical awareness, hence of a historiography of an evaluative rather than expository nature. This explains not only the above-mentioned stand against the claims of "impartiality" on the part of historians such as Reinhold and Ritter, or against the sympathetic attitude of Schleiermacher's hermeneutic school, but also, in writing the *Geschichte*, the



decisive verdicts on doctrines and figures, which at times are so harsh that they themselves become biased. It is sufficient to think of the constant diatribe against the mystic, religious aspects of the Platonic tradition from its ancient to its most recent forms, or of the parallel one against the various expressions of Aristotelian Scholastic metaphysics. In short, Fries has his bugbears, according to a principle partly inherited from the Enlightenment tradition and partly elaborated from his position in the “observatory” of Kantian criticism. The polemical review of post-Kantian philosophy that concludes the work is more comprehensible: at this point, the historical exposition gives way to a theoretical comparison, in a dispute on philosophical method and on Kant’s legacy, where Fries himself was one of those involved, as he himself acknowledges.

Finally, we can mention the philological aspect of the *Geschichte der Philosophie*. From this point of view, the approach is noticeably different as far as the two great cycles of thought are concerned, the ancient and the Christian (medieval and modern). Although Fries’ treatment intentionally favours the speculative rather than the historical, philological aspect, one can say that in the ancient period it moves more cautiously and with greater documentary rigour: the quotations, even if rather infrequent, appear above all in the footnotes, where passages from works but also fragments and testimonies (for example, for the Pre-Socratics from Diogenes Laertius, Aristotle, but also Plutarch, Cicero, Stobaeus, Clement of Alexandria, etc.) are quoted in the original Greek. Fries clearly takes into account the progress and achievements of classical philology as applied to the history of ancient philosophy: he often refers to the authority of Brandis and his *Handbuch der Geschichte der griechisch-römischen Philosophie*, but also to that of Greek scholars such as August Boeckh and Karl Wilhelm Gottling. For the complex world of religiosity in late ancient times and of the Oriental religions, Fries also has recourse to the expertise of some eminent specialists of the time (from Creuzer to Wilhelm von Humboldt and French and English Orientalists), while, for the early centuries of Christianity, Protestant historians and theologians, from the classical Baumgarten and Crusius to the more recent Gfrörer, come to his aid, albeit more rarely.

The method, as we have said, changes noticeably after the treatement of the Middle Ages: the notes gradually disappear, and quotations from the texts become increasingly rare as he approaches the modern and contemporary age. On the one hand, Fries presupposes a greater familiarity with the sources, and on the other, thanks in part to this presupposition, he devotes himself more freely to his critical, evaluative intent. For polemical aims, the quotations and references return in the final appendix, for the developments in post-Kantian philosophy: in order to sharpen his critical weapons, Fries does not spare quotations from Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel (even taking extracts from his *Reinhold, Fichte und Schelling*), almost as if he wanted to pin down his great opponents by pointing out their most blatant absurdities and contradictions.

**11.3.5** Fries’ *Geschichte der Philosophie* was not very successful, precisely because of its markedly speculative approach: on the one hand, it had to face competition from professional historians, whose works were increasing in number in the first half of the nineteenth century; on the other, precisely from the

speculative point of view, it was obscured by the establishment of the great idealist systems, in particular that of Hegel, which even on the historiographical plane with the *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* managed to provide an interpretative model destined, as we know, for far greater success. We should not be surprised, therefore, to find Fries' work mentioned exclusively by the journals of the time concerned with reviews: by them the *Geschichte der Philosophie* did not go unobserved, not only out of professional duty but also because it documented the activity of a figure who was, after all, of a certain importance in the contemporary philosophical world, if only for his long-standing, tenacious opposition to the idealist developments of Kantian doctrine.

However, it was only the first volume of the *Geschichte* that benefited from this attention. This was reviewed in the *Repertorium der gesamten deutschen Literatur* (XIII, no. 1644, pp. 533–535) and in the *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und speculative Theologie* (I, pp. 334–338), the journal edited by Immanuel Hermann Fichte, in the very year of its publication (1837). In the first review (signed “78.”), Fries is openly described as “one of the most renowned philosophers of the present age”, and the attention concentrates on the methodological and speculative standpoint: the affinities in approach with similar works by Tennemann and the Frenchman Degérando do not escape the reviewer, although the unusual choice and order are also pointed out since they differ from the usual ones in treatments of this kind. For this reason, the work is not to be recommended to those first approaching the history of philosophy, while the more expert scholar will find in it “some very acute, profound *excursus*” on single points, such as the presentation of Pythagorean philosophy and some of Plato's doctrines.

The second, slightly longer review can be attributed to Heinrich Moritz Chalybäus, within the framework of an extensive review which, under the title of ‘Philosophie der Geschichte und Geschichte der Philosophie’ (see above, p. 785 note 13), also examined Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* and the historical works by Michelet and Feuerbach. It centres on a comparison with Hegel's work, suggested by Fries himself in the ‘Einleitung’ (see above, pp. 934–935). The reviewer, underlining the organic and philosophical, and not merely erudite, intention of Fries' treatment, points out the apparent analogies with Hegel's *Vorlesungen*. These analogies are, however, precisely only apparent since the perspective that articulates the development of philosophical self-consciousness is dialectic in Hegel and psychological in Fries, according to the degrees of sensible, intellectual, and rational knowledge. While in Hegel the dialectic method confers an organic unity to historical development, for Chalybäus, Fries' psychological method does not succeed in effecting a unity between the subject moment and the objective fact; neither does Fries show that he understands that such a unitary meaning, inwardly necessary for the development of the spirit, can be gained in a different perspective from the speculative pantheism of his opponents.

A third review (signed “π”) of the first volume of Fries' work appeared in 1838 in JALZ (II, no. 105 [Juni 1838], cols 353–358), also part of a wider review of recent publications on the history of philosophy (among them Ernst C G Reinhold's *Lehrbuch*): while not as critically committed as the previous ones, it is, however,

openly favourable. The reviewer acknowledges the long activity of an “old master of German philosophy”, whose last work still testifies to his “youthful freshness”, and he underlines Fries’ faithfulness to the sober, scientific Kantian method, in contrast to the hazy Idealism of Fichte and Schelling. On the methodological plane, the contrast with the Hegelian concept of the historical development of thought is pointed out; and the review ends with a mention of Fries’ theories of the task of the history of philosophy and the positive function of error.

We have no information on reviews of the second volume of the *Geschichte der Philosophie*: it is a significant silence revealing the growing lack of interest in a philosophy and a historiographical conception that mostly appeared as outdated. By this time, even on the level of historiography, Fries’ work was destined to exert an influence only on the restricted circle of his disciples: it was Ernst Friedrich Apelt and Ernst Sigmund Mirbt (on whom see above, p. 783) who took up his legacy.

**11.3.6** On Fries’ life and works: E.L.T. Henke, *J.F. Fries. Aus seinem handschriftlichen Nachlasse dargestellt* (Leipzig, 1867; Berlin, 1937<sup>2</sup>); ADB, VIII, pp. 73–81; B. Bianco, *J.F. Fries. Rassegna storica degli studi (1803–1978)* (Naples, 1980); T. Glasmacher, *Fries-Apelt-Schleiden. Verzeichnis der Primär- und Sekundärliteratur 1798–1988* (Cologne, 1989).

On his thought: T. Elsenhans, *Fries und Kant* (Giessen, 1906) 2 vols; K.H. Bloching, *J.F. Fries’ Philosophie als Theorie der Subjektivität* (Münster, 1971); U. Peinkofer, *Der Begriff des Glaubens bei F. H. Jacobi, J. G. Fichte und J. F. Fries* (Düsseldorf, 1976); S. Poggi, *I sistemi dell’esperienza. Psicologia, logica e teoria della scienza da Kant a Wundt* (Bologna, 1977), pp. 63–70, 114–122, 143–183, 420–424, and 442–445; H. Akbar, *J.F. Fries und die anthropologische Begründung einer rationalen Psychiatrie* (Berlin, 1984); W. Bonsiepen, *Die Begründung einer Naturphilosophie bei Kant, Schelling, Fries und Hegel. Mathematische versus spekulative Naturphilosophie* (Frankfurt a.M., 1997); G. Hubmann, *Ethische Überzeugung und politisches Handeln. J. F. Fries und die deutsche Tradition der Gesinnungsethik* (Heidelberg, 1997); J. F. Fries: *Philosoph, Naturwissenschaftler und Mathematiker*, K. Herrmann and W. Högrefe eds. (Frankfurt a.M., 1999); K. Herrmann, *Mathematische Naturphilosophie in der Grundlagendiskussion. J. F. Fries und die Wissenschaften* (Göttingen, 2000); L. Freuler, ‘Apriorisme et psychologisme sont-ils compatibles? L’interprétation empiriste de la *Critique de la raison pure* de Beneke à J.B. Meyer’, *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, CVII (2002), pp. 353–373; W. Bonsiepen, ‘J.F. Fries’, in *Naturphilosophie nach Schelling*, Th. Bach and O. Breidbach eds. (Bad Cannstatt, 2005), pp. 181–219; F. Gregory, ‘Extending Kant. The Origins and Nature of J.F. Fries Philosophy of Science’, in *The Kantian Legacy in Nineteenth-Century Science*, M. Friedman and A. Nordmann eds. (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 2006), pp. 81–100; .H. Pulte, ‘Kant, Fries, and the Expanding Universe of Science’, in *The Kantian Legacy in Nineteenth-Century Science*, pp. 101–121; Ch. Bonnet, *L’autre école de Jéna. Critique, métaphysique et psychologie chez J.F. Fries* (Paris, 2013); F.V. Tommasi, ‘Du saint au sacré. La réception du schématisme de l’analogie kantienne chez Otto (Fries et Apelt)’, in *Kant. Théologie et religion*, ed. R. Theis (Paris, 2013), pp. 371–379.

On his success: B. Bianco, 'Appunti sulla fortuna di J.F. Fries', *Riv. di Filos. neoscolastica*, LXIV (1972), pp. 708–728; H. Kraft, *J.F. Fries (1773–1843) im Urteil der Philosophiegeschichtsschreibung* (Düsseldorf, 1980).

Reviews of the *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. I: RGDL, XIII (1837), no. 1644, pp. 533–535; H.M. Chalybäus, *Zeitschr. für Philosophie und specul. Theologie*, I (1837), pp. 334–338; JALZ, XXXIV, II, nos 105–107 (Juni 1838), cols 353–371.

On Fries' concept of the historiography of philosophy: Zeller, pp. 15–24; O. Apelt, 'Die Behandlung der Geschichte der Philosophie bei Fries und bei Hegel', in *Abhandlungen der Fries'schen Schule. Neue Folge*, IV/1 (Göttingen, 1912), pp. 337–363; Banfi, p. 123; Geldsetzer, pp. 205–206, 225–226, and *passim*; G. König and L. Geldsetzer, 'Vorbemerkung der Herausgeber' to vols 18–20 of the *Sämtl. Schriften*.

## 11.4 Ernst Christian Gottlieb Reinhold (1793–1855)

### *Handbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte der Philosophie*

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**11.4.1** The son of Karl Leonhard Reinhold, the famous author of the *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie* (see above, pp. 770–775), Ernst Reinhold was born in Jena on 18th October, 1793. He followed his father to Kiel, where he completed his studies, and in 1793 became *Privatdocent*. As early as 1824, he was called to Jena to take up the chair of logic and metaphysics, a post he held until his death on 17th September, 1855. Starting with Kant, whom he had studied under his father's guidance, he was then influenced by other thinkers, from Fries to Herbart, until he finally put forward his own system, called Ideal-Realism or Speculative Theism. In the popular tone of his writings and the dominant interest in themes of psychology and ethics, he maintained, however, a certain link with the *Popularphilosophie* of the previous century.

**11.4.2** Ernst Reinhold's abundant production comprises a theoretical and a historiographical part. His early works, devoted to the foundation of a formal logic, testify to his gradual detachment from a Kantian perspective: the *Versuch einer Begründung und neuen Darstellung der logischen Formen* (Leipzig, 1819); the *Berichtigung einiger Mißverständnisse in des Herrn Hof. Fries Vertheidigung seiner Lehre von der Sinnesanschauung gegen meine Angriffe* (Leipzig, 1820); the *Grundzüge eines Systems der Erkenntnißlehre und Denklehre* (Schleswig, 1822); and *Die Logik oder die allgemeine Denkformenlehre* (Jena, 1827). The starting-point consists of the separation of logic into formal and transcendental, and in the

foundation of the former on the latter; this distinction is then overcome and formal logic is acknowledged as having its own autonomy, since the “pure form of thought” is not “empty”, as his father had claimed in interpreting Kant, but “represents objects of knowledge”. In his mature works, logic is founded on psychology, and logical forms are made to correspond to the diverse forms of activity of the mind; the other disciplines, above all metaphysics, then ethics and the philosophy of religion, which concern most of Ernst Reinhold’s last phase of production, involve psychology and logic: the *Theorie des menschlichen Erkenntnißvermögen und Metaphysik* (Gotha, 1832–1835), 2 vols; *Die Wissenschaften der praktischen Philosophie im Grundrisse* (Jena, 1837), comprising three volumes: I. *Philosophische Rechtslehre*; II–III. *Philosophische Sittenlehre und Religionslehre*; the *Lehrbuch der philosophisch propädeutischen Psychologie und Logik* (Jena, 1839); the *System der Metaphysik* (Jena, 1842<sup>2</sup>); and *Das Wesen der Religion und seine Ausdruck in dem evangelischen Christenthum: eine religionsphilosophische Abhandlung* (Jena, 1846).

In these works, Reinhold calls the system he presents by two different names: ‘Ideal-Realism’ (a term frequently used in philosophical polemics in the early nineteenth century), when it refers to concepts of the “common intellect” that is, an attempt to overcome the opposite unilateralities of realism and idealism; or ‘Speculative Theism’, when it is thought by reason in relation to the absolute causal nexus, and it then involves overcoming the unilateralities of dualistic theism and pantheism, along with atheism (cf. *Lehrbuch der philosophisch propädeutischen Psychologie*, pp. 3–36).

His historical studies differ in relevance and value. Reinhold initially occupied himself with ancient philosophy with an essay on the Pythagoreans: *Beitrag zur Erläuterung der Pythagorischen Metaphysik: nebst einer Beurtheilung der Hauptpunkte in Herrn Prof. Heinrich Ritter Geschichte der Pythagorischen Philosophie* (Jena, 1827). One of his best-known works is dedicated to his father: *Karl Leonhard Reinhold’s Leben und litterarisches Wirken: nebst einer Auswahl von Briefen Kant’s, Fichte’s, Jacobi’s . . . an ihm* (Jena, 1825); his collected letters are numerous (pp. 125–418), comprising, besides the authors cited in the title, Thorild, Bardili, Heydenreich, Garve, Fülleborn, Nicolai, Platner, Maimon, Feder, Lavater, and others. His principal work, dealt with here, is the *Handbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte der Philosophie für alle wissenschaftlich Gebildete* (Gotha: in der Hennings’schen Buchhandlung, 1828–1830, 3 vols). Concerned about the size of the work, as it was too long for use in schools, Reinhold re-elaborated and reduced the contents, publishing the *Geschichte der Philosophie nach der Hauptmomenten ihrer Entwicklung* (Jena, 1845, 1854<sup>4</sup>), which in the course of the various editions was finally reduced to three volumes which corresponded in content to the volumes of the larger work, albeit in smaller format; an even smaller school textbook was based on this: the *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Jena, 1836, 1849<sup>3</sup>). We can finally mention some academic dissertations on historical subjects: *De Platonis physiologia* (Jena, 1840); *De genuina Xenophanis disciplina* (Jena, 1847); *Aristotelis theologia contra falsam Hegelianam interpretationem defenditur* (Jena, 1848).

**11.4.3** Reinhold is aware of the problematics concerning the concept of the history of philosophy that had been the focus of discussions among the Kantians. If Brucker is acknowledged as providing the first example of a systematic treatment, only the Kantian “revolution” made it possible to enquire into the concept of the history of philosophy in depth. However, historiographical theory was so rigidly determined by the Kantian conception of philosophy that it had become unilateral. Tennemann realised this, and Reinhold took his evenly balanced position as a model. The historiography of philosophy has no need to adopt “a rigorously scientific concept of philosophy”, but only a provisional, generic definition with the aim of identifying the initial moment of its history and outlining its field of enquiry. It is, therefore, not the “concept” of philosophy but only the “idea” of it, from which the definition of the history of philosophy can be derived: “[philosophy] is the idea of a science of the ultimate foundations of the laws of nature and of freedom, and of their reciprocal relationship, which philosophers have endeavoured to realize. The history of philosophy is therefore the description of the gradual formation of philosophy, that is to say, a description of the attempts of reason to realize the idea of the science of ultimate foundations and the laws of nature and freedom” (*Handbuch*, I, p. XVIII).

This is nothing new with respect to Tennemann’s definition (see above, pp. 846–856). Reinhold adds a few observations of his own, intended in particular to justify the unity of the history of philosophy and its relationship to philosophy. It is proper to reason, he states, once it has reached a certain degree of development, to dedicate itself to philosophical research. If it is a need of reason, every attempt to philosophise will be carried out “according to the degrees necessary for a growing process”. The historian has the task of showing how, aside from chance in the historical succession of events, “the isolated advancement of speculative doctrines is in reality a ‘succession’ of them” (I, pp. XX–XXI). The need for the development of philosophical knowledge depends on its connection with the individual faculty of reason, which gradually ascends from the observation of reality to the intuitive representation of things and to the comprehension of essences: these are the fundamental stages in history (*die Hauptmomente*) which Reinhold intends to describe (see *Geschichte der Philosophie*, pp. 6–7). The unity of the history of philosophy cannot, however, be defined *a priori*; this depends on the fact that philosophy is indeed the result of reason, but it is not a fully accomplished science, a ‘system’ of apodictic knowledge, but consists in the use and the power of thought, in the increasing perfection of the rational faculty itself.

If philosophy is not a fully accomplished system but one that is continually in formation, the history of philosophy will not coincide with philosophy, even less with a particular philosophical system, even if it is the most extensive and suitable, that is to say the latest, system to which we ourselves subscribe. It is propedeutic to philosophising, both because it clarifies the nature and the character of all rational research that claims to define itself as philosophical, and because it describes the coherent series of systems that have appeared throughout the ages and the peak at which we have arrived. The distinction between philosophy and the history of philosophy (corresponding to the different methods of “criticism” the historian uses

in his work, of either a historical or philosophical type) does not entail subordinating historical work to speculation: “The study of the general history of philosophy is a means that is particularly well-suited to reawakening philosophical reflection in us and in involving us, immediately participating in the discussions that have arisen in the philosophical field, because it permits us to reproduce (*nachzubilden*) within ourselves that which has been thought and expressed by the keenest investigators into truth” (*Handbuch*, I, pp. XXIII–XXIV).

#### 11.4.4 *Handbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte der Philosophie*

**11.4.4.1** The work is made up of two parts, distributed over three volumes of almost the same length, for a total of 1,756 pages. The first part, entitled ‘Geschichte der alten oder der griechischen Philosophie’, takes up the whole of the first volume; the second, ‘Geschichte der neueren Philosophie’, is, on the other hand, divided into two volumes, devoted respectively to medieval and modern thought up to the eighteenth century and to German philosophy after Kant. Each volume is preceded by a ‘Vorrede’ and the whole work is introduced by an ‘Einleitung’, containing reflections of a theoretical and methodological nature and a bibliography.

The internal subdivision follows the framework of periodisation. The first volume consists of four sections: (1) ‘Von Thales bis auf Sokrates und Platon’ (I, pp. 1–158); (2) ‘Von Sokrates und Platon bis auf Epikuros und Zenon von Kition’ (I, pp. 159–360); (3) ‘Von Epikuros und Zenon aus Kition bis zum Ende des Streites zwischen der Stoa und der neueren Akademie’ (I, pp. 361–492); (4) ‘Vom Ende des Streites zwischen der Stoa und der Akademie bis zum Untergange der griechischen Philosophenschulen’ (I, pp. 493–548). The second part is divided into three very long periods: (1) ‘Von dem Wiedererwachen philosophischer Bestrebungen im Mittelalter bis auf Des-Cartes’ (II, pp. 1–124); (2) ‘Von Des-Cartes bis auf Kant’ (II, pp. 127–599); (3) ‘Von Kant bis auf die neueste Zeit’ (III, pp. 3–609). The importance given to post-Kantian German philosophy is clear since the whole of the third, largest, volume is reserved for it.

**11.4.4.2** The history of philosophy is separated into the two parts of ancient (Greek) and modern philosophy. Before the Greeks, among Oriental peoples, there was no philosophy properly speaking, merely ideas and religious systems. There is a clear contrast between religion and philosophy even if both respond to reason’s need to solve the problem of the foundations of the universe and its ultimate causes; however, religion gives answers of a sensible (or empirical) and fantastic type whereas philosophy bases its enunciations on principles and is presented as “true knowledge” (I, p. XXVI). Religion corresponds to mankind’s childhood, philosophy to its maturity, so it is natural to pass from the former to the latter. It is a transition, however, that does not occur without conflict, due to the external apparatus with which religion has protected and defended itself against the claims of philosophy. This is what happened in Greece, where philosophy originated, but

Reinhold admits, in Kantian fashion, that there is a natural antagonism between religion and philosophy owing to the exterior structure (the cult) that the former possesses, which the latter cannot accept.

Philosophy, therefore, was born in Greece. Reinhold credits Tiedemann (see above, p. 658) with having clarified this point once and for all, although it was one on which most scholars basically agreed in the early nineteenth century. The cycle of the development of Greek thought is then considered to have concluded, and it is divided into the four stages of infancy (the Pre-Socratics), maturity (classical philosophy: from Socrates to Aristotle), decline (the schools in Athens), and death (Alexandrian and Neoplatonist philosophy). The watershed between a living, original philosophy and another that is, on the contrary, repetitive and rhetorical, lies in the period of Alexander the Great: "At first, philosophers, poets, historians, etc., whose name gained well-deserved splendour among their contemporaries and immortal fame among their descendents, pursued their chosen ideals in an original, productive spirit; with their later successors taken as a whole, the models of the past were only studied, explained, imitated, criticised, defended, and considered a matter of knowledge and as a subject for erudite research" (I, p. 496).

Modern philosophy presents a continual progression, divided into three periods. The first comprises the beginnings and covers the long centuries of the Middle Ages, then Humanism and the Renaissance; in the second period, the problematics of modern philosophy are formulated by Descartes and developed through the eighteenth century; the third period concerns only the Germans and includes Kant and the developments of critical philosophy. These are further divided into three tendencies: the developments within the Kantian school (K.L. Reinhold, Fichte, and Fries); outside this school, towards overcoming the antinomy between idealism and realism (Schelling, Hegel, and Herbart); also outside this school, but in the sense of scepticism (Schulze, Jacobi).

**11.4.4.3** On the level of interpretation, it should be noted in the first place that the dialectic framework is applied to pre-Socratic thought. Thesis and antithesis are taken to be represented by the Ionics and the Eleatics, and synthesis by the Pythagoreans. Indeed the Ionics were stimulated towards the discovery of the causes of reality by increasingly precise empirical observation, the Eleatics by introducing metaphysical (or *a priori*) research, and the Pythagoreans united the two opposing viewpoints: "This school was the first which knew how to link the metaphysical conception of the world to the physical one, harmonise both these conceptions in the noblest of interests, for the needs of a way of thinking and feeling that was rigorously ethical, and convalidate both purely aprioristic speculation and the theory of natural phenomena within their appropriate sphere. It thus came to discover an intermediate course between the rationalism of the Eleatics, which was still unilateral, and the equally unilateral realism of the Ionics, a middle course that removed the limitations of the two conceptions and joined their merits together" (I, p. 136).

While Plato is placed at the height of ancient thought, Aristotle is placed at its very pinnacle. Reinhold speaks expressly of a "Platonic system" and accepts the Aristotelian interpretation, confirmed by Diogenes Laertius, that it is the outcome



of the synthesis between Heracliteanism and Pythagoreanism, conducted by means of the development of Socratic ethics. The doctrine of ideas is the mainstay of this system, the element common to all its parts, which are placed hierarchically in the following order: dialectics (the unity of logic and metaphysics), physics, ethics, and politics. The meaning of ideas is firstly of a metaphysical order, then a logical one: "The outcome is that the system of ideas is the principle of the universe, which contains the basis of the homogeneous, of the uniform, and of the unchanging in the changing. Opposed to this is the principle in which one finds the basis of multiplicity and the changing of things" (I, p. 204). Ideal and real, sensible and intelligible, ideas and matter: dualism is resolved in the soul, and so the world appears to Plato as a living, organic, and thinking power, a whole.

Aristotle elaborated the most complete and coherent system of ancient thought, overcoming Plato's difficulties. A first-class man of learning, he was able to gather and systematise the entire field of knowledge in the best way. It is true that he was less gifted a writer than Plato but he was superior to him in his spirit of observation and at least equal to him in analytical spirit. Aristotle's advantage depended on the fact that he explicitly tackled the problem of knowledge. In expounding the first part of the system, entitled 'Theorie des Erkenntnißvermögens und Logik', Reinhold highlights the "modern" (that is to say, Kantian) aspects of Aristotelian doctrine: knowledge is the expression of various faculties that interact in the soul; his theory of cognition is founded on psychology; perception is the synthesis of the action of the soul and the action of the external object; the sensible faculty is of a different nature than the intellective faculty; the intellect, thanks to its spontaneity, acquires knowledge of itself and goes beyond the limitations of the sensible; and the perfecting of knowledge requires a method – and Aristotle constructed the first general doctrine of a philosophical method (*Methodenlehre*).

It is not until the modern age that we find systems as complete as Aristotle's. After him, the theoretical aspect of philosophy was increasingly subordinated to the practical one, as can be seen with the Stoics and the Epicureans. Furthermore, theorising was mainly repetitive and had to defend itself from scepticism, an increasingly serious threat: this was a new phenomenon within Greek philosophical culture, which had indeed previously seen positions that tended to be sceptical but which had never reached the point of firmly denying the possibility of scientific knowledge. With the transition, then, of the Platonic school from scepticism to dogmatism at the hands of Philo of Larissa and Antiochus of Ascalon, the conditions for a new period were created, increasingly distinguished by Oriental speculative elements, which definitively destroyed "the already weakening productive strength of the philosophical spirit" (I, p. 490).

Following the lines of Schleiermacher and Ritter (but see also Brucker), Neoplatonism is considered as a secondary philosophical phenomenon, indicative of the decay of Greek thought: "a fantastic quibbling" that led to "fanaticism and mysticism". It is on these grounds that Greek philosophy was interpreted and hence contaminated. The merits of Plotinus are restricted to his work as an interpreter: "In judging Plotinus' philosophemes one cannot ignore that everything that shines with any authentic philosophical light in the web of these speculations is thanks above all

to Plato and, in part, to Aristotle. The particularity that Plotinus shares with his age and above all with his master [Ammonius Saccas] is merely a false and deformed interpretation of Platonic and Aristotelian principles. On the other hand, he believed himself to be nothing but an interpreter of the truths Plato had already conceived, but which he had not yet clearly expressed, and not completely developed" (I, pp. 519–520). The transformation of Greek philosophy into theosophy is hence the element that distinguishes Neoplatonism; with Proclus this contamination led to complete *Schwärmerei*.

The treatment of scholasticism is full of the commonplaces of eighteenth-century polemics. The Middle Ages comprise "a succession of centuries of little importance", placed between the dissolution of Greek philosophy and the resurrection of the philosophical spirit in the modern age. The accusations are well-known: subordination to ecclesiastic power, a lack of originality, arid language, a poor interpretation of Aristotle. The only author who is partly spared is Peter Abelard, but merely for his treatise on ethics, in which he placed the value of moral action in the intention rather than in the result; for the rest, he is considered, like the other Scholastics, to be a quibbling dialectician. Nothing new was produced by the men of the Renaissance since they were too preoccupied with restoring ancient thought and were, moreover, conditioned by the mystic theosophy of Neoplatonism. Not even Francis Bacon, who worked in the field of natural research and the empirical sciences, managed to contribute to any effective progress. Modern philosophy appears only with Descartes, whose doctrines contain "the seed and stimulus of all the subsequent philosophical principles worthy of consideration" (II, p. 123). Reinhold's eyes immediately light on an early development of Cartesianism, the *Logique de Port-Royal*: this marks the beginning of the second period in the history of logic (the first is Aristotle's, the third will begin with Kant), which will then become the doctrine of the cognitive faculty.

The developments of Cartesianism take up the whole of the period until Kant and involve the 'great' thinkers of the modern period: Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, and Hume. Taking their cue from Descartes, the first two follow contrasting tendencies, while the third effects the synthesis: Spinoza places the object (substance) at the centre, Locke the faculty of knowledge, and Leibniz unites epistemology with the metaphysics of substance. After realism and empiricism have been superseded, idealism is produced with Leibniz; Hume also goes beyond empiricism, falling, however, into scepticism. These, briefly, are the salient points that emerge from the long treatment of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy: Spinoza's great dependence on Descartes; the establishment of Locke's philosophy (hence of the empiricist perspective) throughout all of Europe except for Germany, where Leibniz's influence ensured the survival of the "speculative method"; the subordination of Leibnizian metaphysics to epistemology; and the impoverishment of the richness of Leibniz's thought at the hands of Wolff. Only those thinkers who concerned themselves with the problem of cognition are granted a certain amount of attention. Among the French, for example, significant space is devoted to Condillac and Bonnet, while a figure like Bayle is left on the sidelines, and even less consideration is given to the array of *philosophes*, from Montesquieu to

Voltaire and Rousseau. Not only did they not concern themselves with what should be the true object of philosophy but they also opened the door to materialism and impiety which, cloaked in the beautiful words “Enlightenment” and “freedom of thought”, diffused through the theories of jurisprudence, ethics, and religion. “The great extent of the damage”, Reinhold comments, “caused among public opinion in their mother country by the articles of philosophers and collaborators on the great French Encyclopaedia, edited and published by Diderot, is well-known” (II, p. 536).

The arrival of criticism opened up “a new age in philosophy”. Kant’s merits are emphasised: he stimulated the philosophical spirit in Germany so that it reached the level of total self-activity (*Selbstthätigkeit*), thus corresponding completely to the spirit of the German people. All subsequent philosophy was hence to be of Kantian inspiration, in the three directions indicated above. The first represents a development within criticism itself and consists in the effort to retrace Kantian doctrine to a fundamental principle, which for K.L. Reinhold is “representation”, for Fichte the self, and for Fries the concept of the human spirit. The aptitude of Reinhold Junior and his first-hand knowledge clearly emerge from his close analysis of various aspects of these, his immediate predecessors, which highlights the common points and differences. K.L. Reinhold agrees with Fichte on the theoretical aspect of the *Doctrine of Sciences*, but, like Jacobi, places faith above reason; despite the differences in the editions of his *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte soundly maintained the point of view that the reality of the self consists in the infinite striving (*das Streben*) for its realisation; and Fries raised the reform of criticism to the level of method and, instead of deriving reality from the activity of the subject, posited at the foundations of this activity a theory of the human spirit, a new science, called ‘philosophical anthropology’. Despite all these corrections and reforms, for Ernst Reinhold the main difficulty in Kantian doctrine remained unsolved, namely the belief in the existence of the thing in itself.

With Schelling, Hegel, and Herbart we move on to post-Kantian systems. Creative and speculative of mind, but lacking in rigour and analytical capacity, Schelling relied on the poetic inspiration and enthusiasm of the mystics. In this way, the essence of criticism changed: the principle was no longer intelligence restricted to, or in, itself, but absolute, infinite power, that is to say, Spinoza’s substance, grasped by means of a type of intuition denied by Kant, intellectual intuition. Reinhold is ironic about the great success obtained by this philosophy, which is replete with unresolved contradictions which it expressly refuses to resolve, moving on the level of fantasy and poetic language. The true meaning of Schelling’s system found its philosophical expression not in his long line of followers but in Hegel.

Hegel’s originality consists in the use of dialectics, by means of which the knowledge of the ‘One-All’ is seen in the result, “whose truth consists in the totality of its stages” (III, p. 393). After having precisely defined the three stages of dialectics, following the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, Reinhold expounds the Hegelian system with a wealth of details, lingering in particular on logic as a description of “pure” concepts, capable however of containing all real determinations. Hence he also passes a favourable verdict, at least on a historical plane; Hegel, in fact, moves towards the full accomplishment of philosophy as

a science, leading, by means of dialectic, to the most rigorous elaboration of pantheism: "Even if one were convinced of the inadequacy of this conception, one cannot however doubt that perfecting it to this point is an important stage in the progress of philosophy towards science" (III, p. 479). This as far as the historical aspect is concerned; but from the speculative point of view Reinhold sets out a series of criticisms, concentrating them mainly in the field of the philosophy of religion (that aspect of the system that was most widely discussed even within the Hegelian school). First of all, it turns out to be impossible to justify the immortality of the soul since the individual existence of the single person is negated and he is taken to be a mere tool for the conservation "of that general substance which, like Cronus in the ancient myth, devours all its creatures" (III, p. 382). The essence of religion is strongly undermined by the concept of God as the "universal dialectic", which is only adequately accomplished in Hegelian philosophy, while as the "spirit of the world" it is brought about in the consciousness of the spirits of peoples which is always limited. Therefore, Reinhold concludes, "incoherences and contradictions" are always and necessarily part of religion because we are not moving in the full, pure light of a concept but on the level of representations or the finite determinations of the intellect.

Herbart is assigned an important role. His system is also heir to the Kantian tradition in the effort to overcome the antinomy between realism and idealism, without however lapsing into pantheism. It is true that there is no place for religion in the field of Herbart's thought, but Reinhold wonders whether the impossibility of a speculative knowledge of God is unfavourable to religion or whether it is not the only way for it to survive.

Finally, the sceptical results of Kantian problematics are examined. Reinhold is somewhat critical of Jacobi, maintaining that his works, while valid from a literary point of view, "always stand outside the scientific sphere" (III, p. 584). He is more benevolent towards the position of Gottlob Ernst Schulze (author of *Aenesidemus*), picking up the message contained in his *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (Göttingen, 1814): in order to favour the perfecting of philosophy it is necessary to see the connection between Aristotle and Plato, study the limitations of possible experience, and look beyond it. Yet only "a correct theory of human knowledge", which establishes the nature and the relationship between the faculties of the 'intellect' and 'reason', will oblige every talented philosopher "to sacrifice the personal character of his mind and unite Plato's philosophical attitude with that of Aristotle so that a single organic whole will arise from the two that will constitute a system within which a gradual progress may be possible from Aristotelian research to Plato's ideas of God and divine things" (III, p. 607): this is the teaching that Reinhold extracts from the whole history of philosophy.

**11.4.4.4** In setting out his programme, Reinhold based himself on the German historiographical tradition, particularly that of a Kantian leaning (Buhle and Tenne-mann). Given that his readers were not, in the main, either scholars or philosophers, he had to take care to report only the results of his own work and not the research

carried out, which, however, was still his primary task: “A historian of philosophy is required to edit sources, grasp the historical and philosophical meaning of historical material, provide a sense for it all, and use clear, pleasant language” (I, pp. III–IV).

As regards ancient philosophy, Reinhold immediately cautions readers, a precise and well-documented description of the development of thought and the causes of its changes is not possible: this level of explanation, defined as “pragmatic history”, a typical expression of eighteenth-century historiography, involves, on the one hand, impartiality and completeness in seeking sources and, on the other, the ability to see continuity in the philosophical process, despite variations in doctrines and systems. There may be various degrees in the accomplishment of this result; Reinhold himself acknowledges that he remained on the level of the simple hypothesis in reconstructing the Stoic school, particularly in its early stages, while for the Pre-Socratics, despite the lack or scarcity of sources, he uses Aristotelian testimony as a guide to a “pragmatic” interpretation, finding there “the historical and philosophical meaning” of this first stage in Greek speculation (the Pre-Socratics are essentially *Naturphilosophen*).

The historian’s task is to show “the productive power” (*die productive Kraft*) of thought. Reinhold insists on the independence of philosophical reflection above all on the times of crisis in Greek civilisation (the Peloponnesian War, the Alexandrian period). In effect, it is possible to see a certain parallel between the progress carried out by philosophy and the development of literature. In order to evaluate the effect of philosophical thought on Attic literature, Reinhold invites readers to compare the works of the pupils of Anaxagoras (Euripides and Thucydides) with those of the writers of the previous generation (Sophocles and Herodotus). The “productive power” of philosophy tends, however, to gradually decrease: after Aristotle it is preserved in the form of the “independence of thought” (in the Hellenist schools), but later even this independence is lost as philosophical ideas are contaminated by religious doctrines; hence we enter the period of the final crisis of Greek philosophy (the Alexandrian and Neoplatonic ages).

Besides providing everything with a sense (which is what a “pragmatic” explanation consists of), the historian has to evaluate the philosophical relevance of the individual systems for his own time. A philosophy may be of little importance in historical development but may contain, on the other hand, a message and a notable teaching for us. This is true above all from the negative point of view: Reinhold is careful to warn readers of the dangers inherent in some systems, in particular Neoplatonism and the entire medieval Scholastic tradition. The long discourse on Plotinian doctrines (too long, as he himself admits, compared to their importance) should serve to ward off the danger of *Schwärmerei*, which, by the way, conformed to the *Zeitgeist* of those centuries. The sole reason, he observes, for describing John Scotus Eriugena’s thought, which is nothing but “an obscure mystic fantasizing”, is to point out a negative model of philosophising to be avoided (II, p. 20). Even as far as Scholastic thought is concerned, Reinhold speaks of a correspondence between his own age and the *Zeitgeist* of medieval civilisation. These are the only two occasions on which the term is used, and it is not merely by chance that they

are both negative. When philosophy suits the *Zeitgeist*, it is not “productive” but a phenomenon of imitation, bearing little importance on a historical and cultural plane.

Impartiality is a quality that Reinhold frequently claims for himself, but he says he can no longer do so when he comes to deal with the philosophy closest to him. Here his choices are explicit: the most valid tendencies are criticism, idealism, realism, and scepticism. Those philosophers that he finds interesting but which cannot be included in these trends of development are dealt with on their own or only in a note, such as Schleiermacher (in the chapter on Schelling) or Schopenhauer (in the chapter on Herbart).

**11.4.5** The various editions and reworkings of Reinhold’s historiographical works demonstrate that they were used quite extensively in the cultural world of schools and universities. Confined to the limited sector of textbooks for schools, the *Handbuch der allgemeinen Geschichte der Philosophie* (which was to remain his most extensive and ambitious work) went almost unnoticed in the most authoritative literary reviews of the time. Compared to other textbooks, Reinhold’s *Geschichte* could have aspired, as the review that appeared in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* in Jena acknowledged, to greater circulation for all the people educated in the sciences (*für alle wissenschaftlich Gebildete*: this is the subtitle of the work), by presenting itself as a recommended text both for “the incisiveness and clarity of its exposition” and for “the objectivity of its treatment”, making it suitable for personal study of the history of philosophy for a cultured man (JALZ, 1838, no. 105, pp. 358–362). Similar appreciation of Reinhold Junior’s ability to disseminate culture was shown by Fries, who, however, criticised the lack of unity (in the name of so-called impartiality) between philosophy and the history of philosophy (see above, p. 933). The classicist August Boeckh, from a completely different perspective, complained of the excessive “modernisation” of Greek thought (Boeckh, *Encyklopädie*, p. 611).

Owing to its textbook approach, despite its few additional claims, the work does not reveal any particular originality, nor is it noted for important innovations on the level of historiographical doctrine or interpretation. Ernst Reinhold’s *Handbuch* bears testimony to the persistence throughout the first half of the nineteenth century of historiographical themes and frameworks of Kantian origin, taken mainly from Tennemann, at times integrated with motifs, such as the concept of *Zeitgeist* and the dialectic plan, deriving from Hegel (in 1854, in the 4th edition of the *Geschichte* [I, p. 17], Tennemann’s work is still indicated as the model by which the historiography of philosophy should be inspired). The most interesting part is to be found in the third volume which, having abandoned the historiographical perspective, takes an active part in the philosophical debate of the time by proposing an attempt to reconcile the various, opposing systems that might safeguard the principles of morals and religion. However, Reinhold’s “Ideal-Realism”, and even his “Speculative Theism”, in fact met with little favour among his contemporaries, who accused him of superficiality and dogmatism (see Gumpesch, p. 432). The judgement of Ernst Friedrich Apelt, the Kantian (and follower of Fries) was particularly harsh; he not only pointed out Reinhold’s misunderstandings of the

interpretation of criticism but also accused him of grave errors and theoretical ambiguities, finally attributing his speculation to the Lockian field of doctrine, to an empiricism riddled with sensistic elements (from Condillac) and destined to end up in scepticism.

**11.4.6** On Reinhold's life and works: JALZ, 1838, no. 105, pp. 358–362; E.F. Apelt, *Ernst Reinhold und die kantische Philosophie* (Leipzig, 1840); Gumposch, pp. 431–432; Zeller, pp. 13–15; *Philosophie-geschichtliches Lexikon: historisch-biographisches Handwörterbuch zur Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. L. Noack (Leipzig, 1879; repr. Bad Cannstatt, 1968), pp. 737–738; K. Prantl, in ADB, XXVIII, p. 79.

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Note: The names of authors of general histories of philosophy or comparable works, are in *italics*. The numbers in *italics* refer to the pages on which authors are specifically examined. The first name, or names, of authors of contemporary literature are abbreviated to the initial letter, or letters.

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